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A Story of the Pan Handle of Idaho.

BY OLL COOMES,

AUTHOR OF "HIGHLAND HARRY," "KIT BANDY
RATTLED," "WHIP KING JOE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

RED NOTCH CAMP.

RED NOTCH was a mining-camp in the north-east corner of the Pan Handle of Idaho. It had sprung into existence shortly after the Coeur d'Alene Mountain gold excitement had turned the tide of fortune-hunters in that direction. At first it promised well, and in a few brief days it numbered a population of nearly two hundred. Fifty or sixty cabins and "shacks" sprung up like magic along the red bluffs that

"PUT HER THAR, MY LORD JOHN JOSEPH!" EXCLAIMED DAN, RISING AND EXTENDING HIS HAND.

skirted the lovely vale through which dashed a sparkling mountain stream.

The most pretentious building—and of course the most important in any mining-camp—in Red Notch, was that known by the suggestive and euphonious name of "The Fodder Corral." It was a hotel, saloon and gambling-house all in one, and in the flush days of the place did a lively business.

The proprietor, Hank Kline, had once been a cowboy on the plains of Southern Colorado. He was a tall, swarthy-faced, dark-eyed man of forty-five, in whose veins one would mistrust was a trace of Spanish blood. He was regarded as a genial host, and his place was made doubly attractive by the presence of his daughter, Roxana. "Roxy," as she was generally called, was a young woman of twenty, with a sylph-like form, dark hair, and black-blue eyes, and a face of bewitching beauty. But, more attractive than face and form, was her charming, vivacious spirit.

During the flush days of Red Notch, Roxy assisted her father at the bar. Men were then wont to linger in her presence and listen to her musical voice, bask in her smiles and gulp down the fiery liquid that her hands had placed for them. To have Roxy wait upon them was a coveted honor, and her presence there, as a matter of course, was the source of considerable extra revenue. Of which fact Hank Kline was not ignorant. He knew the weakness of man in the presence of a handsome woman, and so he, in his cupidity, encouraged his dark-eyed daughter in all her little arts and guiles by which men were attracted to the bar.

But Roxy's accomplishments were not alone those of a bar-maid. She could entertain in the parlor like a princess. With both rifle and pistol she was an expert, and in horsemanship she was skillful and daring.

But, with all these she was a heartless flirt. She trampled upon the hearts of men with as little mercy as her father bled their pocket-books. In fact, all the geniality of The Fodder Corral was but the thinnest veneering which would readily have been penetrated but for the fascinating smiles and witchery of that dark-eyed houri of the Notch.

The Fodder Corral had a big run during the flush days of Red Notch. But these were few. Within six months after the first cabin had been erected, not over twenty men remained in the camp. The placers had almost played out, and the miners had sought new fields. But among the few remaining were Hank Kline and his daughter, who were satisfied new discoveries would be made and The Fodder Corral again flourish as of yore. A score or two of Chinamen came in and took the place of the deserting miners, and, by working over the "tailings," made fair wages, some of which went into the till of Kline's bar.

And now that there was nobody left in camp susceptible to Roxy's smiles, she seldom attended bar, but almost daily rode away into the hills, or over to the cabin of Hermit Paul, on the shores of Lake Kaniksu, despite the dangers from outlaws and roving bands of outlaw Indians that were constantly prowling through the mountains.

Twice a week she rode over to the North Pacific Railway, some fifteen miles distant, and brought the mail for the camp, for the regular mail service had been discontinued, and there was no travel between the railroad and camp except an occasional party of tourists, and Kline's supply wagon, which made the trip once a month.

This was the condition of Red Notch when we introduce the reader to the place, one August evening, when the usually quiet camp was stirred into a little ripple of excitement by the arrival of a stranger who registered at "The Corral" as Harry West, of Portland, Oregon.

Harry West was a young man of perhaps five-and-twenty years, of prepossessing appearance and fine address. He was well equipped with a hunter's outfit, and the natural inference was that he was a city man taking an "outing" for recreation.

That evening he was called upon by the white miners and bummers left in camp, and politely informed that they made it a social custom to take a drink at the expense of all newcomers. Harry was not slow to take so broad a hint, so hastened to comply with the custom of the drowsy camp.

Young West met Miss Roxana soon after his arrival, and it was clear to observing ones that her pretty face and witching manners had made quite an impression upon him. This appeared to be all the more certain when, day after day, he lingered at Red Notch, spending much of his

time in Roxy's company, and seeming to forget all else.

However this may have impressed the miners, and whatever were the facts in the case, no one—not even Roxy—succeeded in finding out the particular object of the young man's visit there.

This proved somewhat perplexing to Hank Kline and his friends, and the result was that a committee of two, Zack Hunn and Bill Hohn, called upon him one evening in his room, and requested him to give an account of himself and his business there.

"I hope you are not afraid I will steal your camp?" Harry replied, a little irritated by the request.

"That's not answerin' our question," Hohn retorted. "We want to know your business here, and we've a right to know."

"Oh, certainly, certainly," responded West. "I am here to meet a friend, and he and I are going on a hunt."

"Who are you expectin'?" demanded Hohn.

"Dan Baker."

"What, the Grizzly-Killer they calls Cœur D'Alene Dan?"

"Yes, Cœur D'Alene Dan. I wrote him to meet me here the day I arrived, and I expect him any hour."

"Wal, mebbly that's so, and mebbly it ar'n't," growled Hohn, as the two left the room.

A grim smile played about the lips of Harry West as the committee departed.

"They're getting suspicious of me," he mused; "I wonder if there's anything wrong about this camp?"

The next evening, after Harry had eaten his supper and retired to his room, he found a note therein notifying him he must leave the camp inside of twenty-four hours or take the consequences.

He saw now that matters were growing serious. He resolved to see Roxy and show her the note. He found her alone in the lighted parlor. He handed her the warning. She read it over, Harry watching her closely as she did so. He saw a look of surprise and pain pass over her face. It was an opportune moment for the young man, for the fact is, Harry West had fallen desperately in love with the beautiful girl, and he embraced that time to declare the fact to her in impassioned words.

Roxy appeared profoundly surprised, yet it was a surprise that seemed fraught with pleasure. For a moment she sat silent, unable to speak; but her hesitation was to Harry full of hope and his heart took courage.

Finally she raised her dark eyes to her lover's, and, with tremulous lips and voice full of ardent joy, said:

"Harry, I have known you but a few brief days, yet in that time I have learned to—"

She did not finish the sentence, for, at this moment, the door leading into the bar-room was flung open, and the giant form of a young man, clad in a hunter's garb, was ushered into the room by Landlord Kline.

It was Harry's expected friend, Cœur D'Alene Dan, the Young Bear-Hunter.

CHAPTER II.

AN ASSASSIN'S SHOT.

ANXIOUSLY as Harry West had, for days, awaited the coming of his friend, Cœur D'Alene Dan, he sorely regretted his coming when he did—at the moment when the very words that were to decide his future happiness were forming upon the lips of the lovely Roxana Kline—words that were never uttered because of that abrupt entrance.

As the door swung open, the maiden quickly arose to her feet, her face assuming its natural composure in an instant. As for Harry, he sat still, the very picture of confusion and surprise.

"Hello, old boy!" burst from the lips of Cœur D'Alene Dan, as his eyes fell upon the face of his young friend; "I've got around at last. How are you, Harry, anyhow?"

"Well as usual, Dan, my fine fellow!" responded Harry, rising and grasping his friend's hand. "You look natural as an old shoe, but still you're growing. You'll be a man after awhile, boy, if you keep on. But, Mr. Baker, I have the pleasure of introducing you to Miss Kline."

Dan, with doffed hat, bowed politely to the young lady, at the same time observing:

"I did regret keepin' Harry West waitin' here, Miss Kline, but from appearances he's not been lonesome, and probably wishes I'd never come. Harry's a great ladies'-man."

Cœur D'Alene Dan was a young Hercules in stature, standing fully six feet in his moccasins. Broad-shouldered, deep-chested, with a large,

well-shaped head set upon a stout, muscular neck, he was a noble specimen of manhood. And yet, he was but a beardless boy, being scarcely twenty years of age. As a hunter in the Cœur D'Alene Mountains he had won his sobriquet, and a fame second to none in all that wild region; and for his upright character, his kind heart and jolly spirit, he was loved and respected; for his invincible courage, he was admired as an ideal mountaineer; and youth of heroic mold.

Roxy Kline retired shortly after the younger hunter came in, leaving the two friends alone in the room.

"By smoky! she's a distressed pretty gal, ar'n't she, Harry?" was the hunter's observation as the door closed behind the young woman; "Lordy! sich eyes! and sich a form! and sich graceful movements! Dog-nabbed! if she isn't a real queen of hearts! Reckon you're sorry I broke in on you, eh, Harry?"

"Oh, no, Dan," answered Harry, though, at the same time, he mentally admitted that he was truly sorry; "I have been here so long that the camp has become suspicious of me, and just this evening served notice on me to leave or take the consequences."

"Ho! ho! ho!" roared Dan, in his good-natured way; "that's pretty good on Harry West. But I'm sorry that I couldn't git here sooner. I was away over in the mountains when your letter came, and it waited for me a week. But I'm now at your service, ready to—"

Landlord Kline now came in to inform Dan that his supper was ready. As all the others had been to supper the young hunter had to eat alone, and when he left the room Harry West found himself in his own company.

At once the young man's thoughts reverted to Roxana and her unfinished sentence. How he longed for her to return and finish her confession! He would not leave the parlor through fear the opportunity might be lost, notwithstanding he could hear a commotion out in the bar-room that indicated some unusual excitement among the miners.

Suddenly the door opened and Roxy came sweeping in, her face aglow with mirth and excitement:

"Harry," she exclaimed, "Red Notch is getting to be quite a resort. There are two new arrivals out here—a gentleman and his valet—a real English lord who is making a tour of the country. His name is Lord John Joseph Keswick, of England, and such a looking old sinner that he is! Come and take a peep at him."

Roxy held the door slightly ajar so that Harry could get a glimpse of the Englishman, and he could scarcely suppress a laugh when he did so. His lordship was fully six feet high, slender as a snake, with long, angular limbs. He might have been in the neighborhood of sixty years of age, and was a Briton throughout. His thin, gray locks were parted in the middle and combed smooth to his long, oddly-shaped head. His very scant whiskers had the English cut. A pair of big, gold-bowed eye-glasses strided his thin, sharp nose. His velvet coat was buttoned from top to bottom, and so short that it scarcely reached his narrow hips. His pants of light corduroy fitted his slender limbs, tight almost as the hide. Heavy walking-shoes, gray cloth leggings with brass buttons, and a hat like a helmet, completed his attire.

His valet, a little, smooth-faced man with a keen eye and quick, nervous temperament, was dressed in a plain suit of gray jeans. In looks and dress there was nothing to indicate the Englishman about him.

Cœur D'Alene Dan returned from supper to the parlor, and as he came in he exclaimed, in his bluff way:

"Now, Harry, I'm in shape again, and am ready to hear what business you've got on hand, if it's anything from killin' grizzlies, makin' love to a pretty woman, or tearin' down a mountain."

Excusing herself, Miss Roxana again left the parlor.

Seeing that the doors leading into the parlor were closed, Harry walked over to the one window in the room, pulled down the thin muslin blind, and then seated himself facing the young bear-hunter.

"Dan," he said, "I'll tell you now what I sent for you for; since we were hunting in the Teton country, one year ago, I have become a Government employé."

"Whew! great smoke! you don't say so?" Dan exclaimed, a smile lighting up his big, boyish face.

"Yes, I am in the Secret Service of Uncle Sam," Harry went on. "In other words, I'm a detective. It has become pretty well under-

stood that a considerable amount of smuggling of dutiable goods, especially opium, from British America into the United States is going on, and detectives are being placed to watch for the operators. I have been assigned to the Idaho Pan-Handle country, with permission to call such assistance as I deem necessary; and I have deemed your help necessary since you know all this country so well."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the boy giant. "It tickles me to think of Dan Baker as an assistant detective—Bear-Slayer as a Government lynx! Cœur D'Alene Dan a smuggler-shadower! It's stupenduous, by smoke! But I'll admit, Harry, I know this country pretty well, and if you think thar'll be any grizzly-bear fun and fightin' in the business, I wouldn't mind takin' a crack at the smugs. A little change o' work might be good for my health."

"Yes, Dan, there's danger of you being stunted," Harry observed with a smile, "and I think the change'll be good for you. As to fun and fighting, we may get all we care about, before we get through."

"Wal, Harry, put me down as your pard in gunnin' for the covies, but the idea makes me laugh."

"You don't want to drop your character as a bear-hunter, Dan, but you must go armed and equipped as usual for grizzlies, and if you run across one, take it in. Keeping up your character as a hunter is the way to deceive the shrewd scamps we are to spot and scoop in. I've come armed for bear, and we must leave here ostensibly on a bear-hunt, and keep it up."

"You're a slick one, Harry!" declared Dan; "and I know will be a royal mountain-lynx detective. I reckon we'll strike out—when?"

"In view of the fact that I have been notified to quit Red Notch or take the consequences, I would be ready to go to-night, if it wasn't for one thing."

"And what's that, pard?" asked Dan.

"I would like to have a talk with Miss Kline before—"

The words died on Harry's lips, for, with the simultaneous crack of a pistol, a bullet crashed through the window behind him, and, with a cry of mortal pain, he fell forward upon the floor at the feet of his friend, shot down by an assassin!

CHAPTER III.

THE VALET'S WARNING.

A SECOND shot quickly followed that of the assassin, but it was from the big revolver of Cœur D'Alene Dan. Scarcely had Harry fallen from his chair, when the big hunter, with remarkable presence of mind, whipped out his weapon and sent a ball through the window in hopes it would find the murderer.

The thunderous crash of the great pistol fairly shook the house, and its report quickly aroused the inmates. Hank Kline came rushing into the room, followed by others, in a great excitement. And, just as Roxy came in, Cœur D'Alene Dan raised the form of his young friend from the floor.

The girl caught sight of Harry's white face, down which a stream of blood was trickling to the floor.

"Oh! what has happened?" she shrieked, as she ran toward the prostrate man.

"Some murderous hellyon has assassinated Harry!" was the outspoken answer of Cœur D'Alene Dan.

Kline led his distracted and terrified daughter from the room.

Dan, supporting the body of his friend, saw Harry open his eyes and gaze around him, and then, to the surprise of all, he was heard to say:

"It was a close call, Dan!"

"By smoky!" burst from Dan's lips, "the man's not dead, by a long shot! Bring in some water, somebody, and a bandage. He's only wounded! Hurry there, now!"

"That's all, Dan, my boy," Harry said; "but I was hit hard."

On examination it was found that the assassin's bullet, evidently of small caliber, had struck the mullion of the lower window-sash, causing a slight deflection of the ball, else Harry would have been shot squarely through the head. As it was, the bullet glanced along the side of his skull, just above the temple, plowing a deep and ugly furrow that bled profusely.

But Cœur D'Alene Dan, assisted by Peter Grew, Lord Keswick's valet, who took hold like an old surgeon, soon had the young man's wound dressed and bandaged.

Dan was bitter in his denunciation of the

cowardly attack, but the miners seemed to regard it as an every-day occurrence incident to the camp, and but little, if any, effort was made to hunt the assassin down.

In the course of an hour or two all had once more become quiet in The Fodder Corral, and Harry West, aside from a stinging pain in the head, was himself again; and while he and Dan sat discussing the situation, Hank Kline came in with Lord Keswick and said, addressing Dan:

"Cœur D'Alene Dan, this is Lord John Joseph Keswick, of England, who's wantin' to make the 'quaintance o' the Baby Bear-Hunter o' the Rockies."

"Put her thar, my Lord John Joseph!" exclaimed Dan, rising and extending his hand.

"Ah, thanks!" responded Keswick; "glad to meet you, Mr. Cœur D'Alene Dan Baker. By Jove! I've 'ad a great desire to see you, my fine fellow! Hi've 'eard you was a great curiosity."

"I'm sure I don't set myself up for a curiosity, my lord," Dan answered.

"Oh! Hi beg pardon, sir," apologetically; "you misunderstood me. I meant to say I possessed the curiosity to meet *you*. By Jove! you hare a fine fellow. You're hancestors were Hinglish, were they not?"

"No; Bunker-Hill Americans from the jump," retorted Dan, countering against the Englishman's egotism.

"Oh, beg pardon! but your fine *physique* and your reputed indifference to dangers in these 'orrid Hamerican jungles hare so suggestive hof Sir Samuel Baker and other noted Hinglish 'unters that I was led to make the hobservation. Beg pardon, sir; but your friend 'ad ha narrow hescape."

"He got a ditch tunneled along his head, but he's good as a dozen dead men yit," assured the giant.

"A narrow escape, by Jove!" declared his lordship. "You need to shoot a few hassassins as well as gr'zzlies, my fine fellow. This is ha beastly country, I vow."

"Been here long, my lord?"

"Thanks—yes; some six weeks up and down the Pacific Railway. A deuced 'ard tramp we 'ad the hother day by putting credence hin the story hof the haverage Hamerican liar, and so we'll rest here a week. By Jove! a hunter named Rattler—Tom Rattler—at Missoula told hus by going to the top hof a 'igh mountain-peak we could see, with a strong glass, all hove the whole United States. We were blarsted fools enough to believe the 'onest-looking hold villain, and we set hout. We weré seven days, 'ardest work of my life, getting to the top of that blarsted mountain-peak, though it didn't seem more than a day's walk away. And, by Jove! when we did get there, shamel shamel! we couldn't see 'alf the States. We couldn't even see the village hof Homaha, to say nothink hof the pig-sties and bull-pens called Chicago. Hamerica is a deuced big country, hafter hall; but its biggest things are its liars. By Jove! they lie so easy—so hinnocent-like—so natural! If we ever meet that Tom Rattler, blarst me hif I don't 'ave my valet, Peter, thrash thunder hout hof 'im; I will, by Jove!"

Harry West smiled, while Cœur D'Alene Dan, no longer able to repress his emotions, burst into a peal of laughter.

Lord John Joseph elevated his nose and peered at the big hunter in evident surprise, muttering as he did so:

"A strange country—a queer people, by Jove!"

"Yes," observed Dan, "we're pretty close to British America."

"That fact don't himprove my opinion of British America, a blarsted bit, sir," responded Keswick, who readily perceived the sarcasm in Dan's remark. "But, the country aside, Dan, I'd like to take a turn with you hin the jungles and pop hove a few grizzlies before I sail for 'ome; I would, by Jove!"

"It's a wonder American grizzlies are good enuff game for yer aristocratic gratification," put in a voice from behind Keswick, and looking around he saw Bill Hohn standing in the doorway, a look of disdain on his unpleasant face.

"Ah! beg pardon, sir," and the Englishman turned to the miner, "but I was haddressing myself to Cœur D'Alene Dan."

"And I was addressin' myself to *you*," declared Hohn, evidently in a quarrelsome mood.

"By Jove! you're a churl, sir, a *churl*!" retorted Keswick; "I 'ave no desire to talk to you. You'll retire, sir."

"Not as anybody knows of, I don't retire," exclaimed Hohn; "Bill Hohn's not the man to flunk from any Britisher that ever wore pants. Do you savey, eh?"

"Such beastly talk!" sneered the old Briton; "you are an Hamerican fool, sir, an Hamerican fool!"

"By thunder, I take that from no galoot!" exclaimed Hohn in a frenzy, advancing upon Keswick.

It was quite apparent, now, by the appearance of other miners at the door, that Hohn had come in there on purpose to raise a rumpus with the Englishman, and had soon succeeded in doing so. He was a quarrelsome bully and prided himself on his fighting qualities. To have the honor of licking an English lord was the only motive he had in provoking a quarrel, and when the pretext was given for the blow, he lunged out furiously at the tourist's face.

But, wonder of wonders! Lord Keswick parried the lick as gracefully as though he were a trained athlete, and, with a "beg pardon," landed a blow on Hohn's neck with such terrific force that the bully was knocked half insensible to the floor.

As the miner scrambled to his feet, others began crowding into the room, swearing vengeance on the old tourist; but, at this stage of the proceedings, Cœur D'Alene Dan sprung to his feet, his eyes flashing and his big form towering up like a Titan's, exclaiming in a voice of no uncertain meaning:

"Hold on there, men of Red Notch! Fair play! One at a time!" and he laid his hand on his revolver. "You hear me chirrup!"

The miners paused. Keswick stood erect, awaiting the renewal of Hohn's attack. But, it never came. His friends caught the half-dazed man and dragged him from the room, and quiet was once more restored.

"My lord," said Harry West, as Keswick resumed his seat as coolly as though he had simply performed an ordinary act, "the people of Red Notch don't like you and me."

"No; but, when they know us better, per'aps they will," Keswick responded, with a hidden meaning in his words.

"By the way, Mr. West," said Peter Grew, his lordship's valet, "when do you expect to leave Red Notch?"

Harry glanced about the room, and seeing none of the miners present, replied:

"To-morrow morning, I presume."

"Why can't you go to-night?" Peter asked.

"I see no necessity for it."

"Your life's in danger every moment you stay here!" Grew declared, speaking in a low, earnest tone.

"There's some scoundrel around here that's tried to kill me, I'll admit."

"Mr. West," and Grew's voice fell still lower, "it was a *woman* that attempted to kill you. I stood within the deep shadows of a bush within ten feet of her, and saw her fire the shot. Her head was covered with a shawl and I could not see her face."

"Impossible, Mr. Grew! Impossible!" declared Harry. "There's but one woman in this camp, and she is Roxy Kline, our landlord's lovely daughter."

"Young man," said Grew, "the pretty face of a woman has been the ruination of many a noble man. Let me tell you, sir, the woman I saw came out of and went back into this house! If Roxy Kline is the only woman in this camp, then Roxy Kline is your would-be murderer!"

CHAPTER IV.

A MOUNTAIN DELIVERANCE.

ALMA GRAYSON was lost in the mountains, and terror filled her young breast as she wandered on and on through the desolate hills where it seemed no human foot had ever trod before. She was a young girl of seventeen, and one of a party of excursionists that had been sojourning for several days on Lake Kaniksu, a beautiful sheet of water lying some fifteen or twenty miles north of Red Notch Camp. She was scarcely aware of being out of sight of camp when she discovered she was lost, and it was not until she had tramped over miles, even then, that her courage gave way. She was naturally a brave and plucky little girl, but her long, weary walk, the deep, desolate solitude into which she was continually drifting, were more than she could bear up under, and so fear and distress filled her mind and heart.

Still she wandered on aimlessly, hopeless. Hours that seemed like days to her dragged on, but all too soon, she saw the sun dropping down toward the hilltops, and knew that night was not far off.

Finally she sat down to rest. Then it was that the sound of a voice fell upon her ears. She started up, and, through the mist in her eyes, she saw two men coming toward her. But they were strangers, and the little ray of hope that

the sound of their voices had kindled in her breast, went out in the gloom of a new-born fear that their presence excited.

Both were rough, bearded men, and in the cold, hard lines of their faces she instinctively realized that she was in the presence of men than whom she would rather have met the fiercest mountain beasts.

"Wal, by the almighty hills! What have we found, Tim?" were the first words uttered by one of the pair.

"A mountain fairy, Jubal, by Tophet!" was Tim's response.

Alma shrunk back, her face white, her lips sealed.

"Don't be skeert, little gal," said the man, Tim, "but tell us who you are and whar you comes from, child. Speak right out like the little white-faced lady that ye be."

There was a touch of kindness in the man's voice and words that gave Alma a little respite from her fears, and she again looked up. The man stood closer to her—a small, dark-eyed man of thirty years. He put out his hand and touched her upon the shoulder. Had it been the touch of a serpent she would not have recoiled with a deeper shudder of horror.

"Gal," said the man Tim, "you be flighty—you must be lost in these hills. Who are ye and whar do you belong?"

"My friends are on Lake Kaniksu," Alma found words to reply, "and as I am lost, I hope you will be so kind as to set me on my right course to the lake."

"Why, great pestilence! gal, you're ten miles from Lake Kaniksu, and it's almost sundown. You'd better go with us to our camp, and stay till mornin', and git rested."

"Yas," added the man, Jubal, "we'll take keer o' you."

"But you are strangers," Alma protested.

"Oh, you'll git acquainted with us," assured Jubal; "we're hunters, we are."

"Of course we are," added Tim; but his looks belied his words, and despite their assurance Alma was afraid to trust them. This they saw, and finding they could not secure her confidence, the villain, Jubal, for villains they both were, deliberately took her by the arm and pulled her along.

Alma uttered a cry of terror and struggled in vain to break from the rascal's grasp. Tim took hold of her other arm, and in this manner she was hurried along the valley, despite her struggles and petitions for mercy.

But the villains had not gone far with her when they were suddenly brought to a halt by the appearance of a strange man before them. He had stepped from the bushes by the wayside, carrying in his hand a short, stout club that had been whittled smooth. The man was no other than Lord John Joseph Keswick, and, in apparent surprise at the presence of the two men and the girl, he stopped short, and surveyed them through his eye-glasses, at the same time drawing out:

"Well, ba Jove! what's this we 'ave here?"

The outlaws were not only surprised, but puzzled by the appearance of this unique specimen of humanity there in the mountains. In silence they surveyed him from head to foot, Jubal's hand resting upon the butt of his revolver.

To Alma there was nothing in his presence to inspire hope, and the very first thought that flashed through her excited brain was that he was a crazy man.

"Wal, who the deuce are you?" Jubal finally demanded.

"Beg pardon, sir," responded his lordship, "but I ham Lord J. Joseph Keswick, of Hingland, a descendant hof the great Don Quixote—a defender hof the hinnocent."

His words confirmed Alma's first impression of the man—that he was crazy.

"Wal, my Lord J. Joseph," retorted Tim, who seemed to be of the same opinion as the girl, "I guess you're off your beat, and I'd advise you to be gittin' back to the lunatic asylum."

"Ah—thanks!" returned the old tourist, advancing closer, twirling his stick on his fingers, "but, hit happens to me you're pretty himpudent to a stranger."

Jubal made a motion as if to draw his revolver when, quick as a flash of lightning, the tourist's arm was flung forward, and, almost with the same motion, he gave the two outlaws a rap on the head with his club that stretched both of them senseless and bleeding upon the earth.

"There, now—beg pardon, Miss—" but the rest of his words were lost to Alma, for, filled with a greater dread of the crazy man, as she

believed Keswick to be, than the outlaws, she turned and fled down the valley like a deer.

The Englishman followed her, and finally overtook her at a point where the deer-path she was following led close along the edge of a high, perpendicular embankment on the left. On the right was a dense growth of bushes crowding close upon the path.

"Stop, girl!" exclaimed the Briton, as he came close to the fleeing girl; "stop, I say; for God's sake, don't break your neck!"

At length he came up with her, and, seizing her by the arm arrested her flight. Alma screamed with terror.

"Girl!" he admonished, "don't be afraid of me; I—"

At this juncture the Englishman was seized from behind, by a man who had glided noiselessly as a shadow from the bushes, lifted bodily into the air and fired over the embankment into a dense thicket of bushes and vines!

Alma glanced around at her rescuer. A light of recognition and joy broke upon her pale face, and her white lips uttered the glad words:

"Oh, thank God! it is Tom Rattler!"

"It are, by the great Rosycrucians, Miss Alma!"

CHAPTER V.

WOUNDED AND ADRIFT.

It was the redoubtable Tom Rattler, indeed, who had come to the rescue of Alma Grayson. He was the guide of the excursion party to which the girl belonged.

"Miss Alma, who the Sam Hill war that critter what war chasin' you?" the old hunter asked, when the maiden had somewhat recovered from her fright.

"He called himself Lord John Keswick, but I know he is either crazy, or a bad, evil man feigning lunacy!" was the girl's answer.

"I'll see if I can't shoot him yit," declared Tom, advancing to the edge of the bank over which he had so dexterously hoisted his lordship; "I alers kill snakes and lords."

He peered over the bank, but could see nothing of the Englishman; but he could hear a rustling and a scrambling among the vines and bushes at the base of the bank, and an occasional grunt or imprecation.

A smile lit up the countenance of the old hunter, and he was about to call down to the discomfited lord when Alma warned him of the approach of the two men Keswick had liberated her from, accompanied by three or four Indians, or white men dressed as such.

Tom quickly secured his rifle, and then led the way down the defile, ever and anon glancing back over his shoulders to note the movement of his pursuers. He had no time for converse with Alma, else he might have learned that Lord Keswick had really befriended the girl, however much she feared the man, and that he, in his haste, had committed an unpardonable blunder, if nothing worse.

Pushing along as rapidly as possible, the fugitives finally came out into a broad, wooded valley, down which ran an old Indian trail to the shores of Lake Kaniksu. Just as they reached this their ears were greeted by the sound of hooved feet, and, looking around, they saw a young girl mounted upon a pony galloping down the valley toward them.

"By the great Rosycrucians!" exclaimed Old Tom, "it are Little 'Puss,' the darter o' Hermit Paul!"

"It is, indeed," declared Alma, who had met the maiden during their sojourn on the shores of the lake, at her father's cabin.

Approaching, the girl drew rein before them. Scarcely seventeen, with soft brown eyes, glowing cheeks, and long flowing hair, Little Puss was the very picture of girlish beauty.

As she drew rein Tom saw that her face was flushed with excitement, and, glancing back over her course, she exclaimed, before either of the others could speak:

"Mr. Tom Rattler, the Indians are making trouble! More than a score are coming down the valley this moment!"

"Yes, and others are after us," Old Tom said, with a nervous start. "Come, we must hasten on."

"Seat that young lady behind me, Mr. Rattler, and I will hasten to our cabin with her," Little Puss commanded.

Tom waited for no further words, but, lifting Alma from the ground, seated her behind Puss, on the pony.

"Now go, gals," he said, "and may God speed ye! These hills are bulgin' full o' murderous devils!"

The girls rode on, Tom following with the nimble steps of youth, his Winchester lying on his arm ready for instant work should the pursuers crowd too close upon him.

The girls spoke but few words as they rode along, their young hearts throbbing with fear.

The valley as they proceeded grew narrower, and the hills on either side more rough and broken.

Suddenly a little cry broke from Puss's lips, and, at the same instant, her pony gave a snort of affright and stopped still in its tracks.

Puss quickly discovered the cause of its alarm. A great shaggy beast was moving across the defile before them. It was a monster bear upon which it would be dangerous to crowd. But, the surprise seemed mutual. The bear stopped short, glanced at the horse in evident alarm, and would doubtless have fled into the hills but for an unfortunate occurrence. Just as it paused, a rifle-shot rung out among the hills, the animal gave a roar of pain, rolled over a time or two on the earth, then regaining its feet, charged toward the pony and its riders in furious rage, blood streaming from its mouth.

With great presence of mind Puss turned her pony to flee. It was her only course to escape the fury of the grizzly, whatever dangers might otherwise be encountered.

But, it seemed that dangers were concealed in every bush, for, as she wheeled her pony, she found a ruffianly-looking white man and a hideously-painted savage confronting her, and, as she attempted to ride by them, the outlaw seized the pony by the bits and jerked the animal back upon its haunches.

Little Puss uttered a cry of rage and struck viciously at the man with her riding-whip, while Alma, slipping from her seat fell unconscious upon the ground. The Indian ran up, and seizing Puss dragged her from her saddle, when the outlaw began backing the pony down to receive the attack of the oncoming grizzly.

But, however well and quickly the two scoundrels' plans had been conceived, to capture the girls, and escape the fury of the wounded bear, they were countered by those of another. Hardly had Puss's feet touched the ground when there was a second sudden appearance from somewhere—a great, stalwart giant figure, whose eyes blazed with an incarnate fire, and whose big boyish face was the very picture of deadly fury, and who came like a whirlwind upon the scene. It was Cœur D'Alene Dan, the Young Bear-Hunter!

The young giant's coming was silent as it was swift, and, swifter still was his vengeance! With one blow of his fist the outlaw fell as if stricken by a thunderbolt. With another bound he reached the Indian, and, seizing him, lifted him aloft as though he were an infant and flung him with mighty force full into the face of the grizzly that was now upon them!

The force of the collision staggered the bear, but, before the half-stunned red-skin could recover his feet, the enraged brute had seized him and begun its terrible work.

At this juncture the young detective, Harry West, Cœur D'Alene Dan's friend, appeared upon the scene. It was he who had fired the shot which had wounded the grizzly, being wholly unaware of the presence of any one but his companion at the time. Eager to kill a grizzly he had embraced the first opportunity that offered since leaving "The Fodder-Corral," three days previous, to go in search of opium-smugglers.

It was an unfortunate shot, but, like the fearless man that he was, he hastened to his friend's assistance the moment he saw the mischief he had wrought. Great as had been his haste, however, the outlaw was down and the Indian in the clutches of the bear when he arrived on the scene.

Little Puss's pony broke loose and ran away. Alma lay unconscious upon the ground. The Indians and outlaws were coming down the valley. Not a moment was to be lost.

"Oh, Dan!" cried Puss, in wild excitement, "what shall we do? We cannot leave that poor girl!"

"No, nor will we—"

The crack of a rifle caused him to look around. Tom Rattler could be seen approaching, fighting on the retreat, by turning and sending a shot at the foe, several of whom could be seen dodging among the trees and bushes on the hillsides.

"It's Tom Rattler, the hunter," said Puss; "only a short time ago he rescued poor Alma from those bad men."

"Harry," remarked Dan, "in our smuggler-huntin' we've struck a regular nest of devils. The curse of 'The Fodder-Corral' seems to be

pursuin' us. I tell you we've got to fight our way out of this, and fight we will!"

Harry West lifted the inanimate form of Alma in his arms and started off with her down the valley, Puss carrying his rifle and leading the way.

Dan put a bullet through the brain of the wounded grizzly, for the unequal contest between it and the Indian had about ended. Then he motioned Tom Rattler to hurry forward. He awaited the old borderer's coming. Their greetings were spirited. The presence of the prostrate outlaw, the dead bear and the mutilated savage told the old man that the young giant had been at work.

"You've been makin' a muss o' things 'round here, boy," Rattler said, with a grim smile. "I swatted one or two o' the red-rinded varlets that crowded on me, and I reckon it'll rile 'em up like hornets; but, let 'em rile!"

Few words were necessary for an understanding of the situation between the hunters, when they joined issues against the foe. Retreating down the valley, keeping a sharp watch behind them, and ever and anon sending a bullet at the human coyotes that were following—gliding from cover to cover—they discussed the situation amid the "ping" and "spatting" of bullets around them.

"If it weren't fur them gals, Bear-slayer," Old Tom observed, "I'd like to show you some fancy work with them varlets. I'm not as young as I used to be, but, if thar's anything the Red River Epidemic loves, it's plenty room for a runnin' fight with the smoky-skins. But the gals must be saved, at all hazards, and it's a good thing, Bear-slayer, you and your friend dropped in when you did. That poor Miss Alma must be nighly dead with terror, for I rescued her from the dod-gastest ole white cuss I've struck in all this Selkirk Range o' the Rockies. He was dressed like a fool, and called hisself, so Alma said, Lord Somebody."

"Lord Keswick?" Dan asked.

"That's the very feller, Dan'l—know the old lark?"

"I have seen him—yes. Do you mean to say he had captured the girl, Alma?"

"That's the way I took it, Dan'l, and just as he laid his hand on her I seized him by the scruff o' the neck and the breechin' and fired him over a high bank into a bramble. Oh, but he war a lily-lipped hummer, Dan'l! He must 'a' been the friend o' them varlets comin' arter us—Whew! that war a clus' shave!"

A bullet from the pursuing foe cut so close to the old man's head as to cause him to dodge, but the sound seemed to thrill every nerve in his old frame. His flashing eyes swept the hills behind them; in a twinkling his rifle flew to his shoulder, and as quickly rung out.

"Take that, ye red-rinded varlet!" he exclaimed, "and remember the Red River Epidemic's abroad in the land!"

"That was a marvelous fine shot, Tom," declared Cœur D'Alene Dan, as the death-yell of a red-skin came winding down the hills.

"Thanks, boy, thanks!" replied the old mountain ranger.

Thus the retreat continued for two or three miles, the open condition of the country enabling the two men to keep the pursuers at a fair distance behind. But these conditions were gradually changing as they approached Lake Kaniksu. The hills were growing more abrupt, broken and woody—a condition favorable to the foe.

However, the lake was not far away, but just what advantage this goal would afford, the fugitives had not been able to determine. The cabin of Hermit Paul was fully three miles north of where they would strike the lake, and that was the only place where anything like safety could be secured.

A new difficulty suddenly arose before the lake was reached. Harry West had not been in the best of health since the attempt on his life at The Fodder-Corral. His wound had given him much trouble, and had threatened a fever. But of this he thought nothing when the lives of Puss and Alma were at stake, and in hurrying away, with the unconscious form of the latter, the burden proved more than his enfeebled strength could withstand, and when less than a hundred yards from the lake, he fell in a dead faint, the blood gushing from his nostrils. And this was the state of affairs when the hunters came up.

Fortunately, however, Alma had recovered consciousness, and with Puss's help was able to walk, and as there was no alternative now, Cœur D'Alene Dan lifted the form of his young companion in his strong arms and bore him

safely to the lake-shore. As he laid the inanimate man on the ground, he said:

"Tom, here the struggle is to come. If we've got to fight, we'd as well have it out here. If you want to go on with the gals, well and good. As for me, I will never desert Harry. I will die with him!"

"Danny," returned Old Tom, with a look of admiration, "you're a lily-lipped hummer, and I want to stay and show you a sample o' the Epidemic's fightin'. See! yonder is a canoe! Why not put the gals and your friend in it and send them out into the lake? It will not carry us all, but it will those three."

"A splendid idea, Tom!" declared Dan, who had not noticed the boat before.

The canoe—a small Indian craft—lay beached under some willows. It was but the work of a moment to launch it and put the girls aboard. Then Harry West was laid in the bottom, his head resting on Alma's lap. All was ready to go, but where was the paddle? It could be found nowhere! A look of disappointment clouded the faces of the hunters.

Cœur D'Alene Dan looked out upon the water. The wind was quartering, but favorable. The little boat rocked and swayed as if impatient to be off.

"Hold! I have it!" suddenly exclaimed Dan, as a thought occurred to him, and whipping out his great bear-knife, he cut off two bushes with thick, dense foliage. These he handed to the girls, saying: "Hold these bushes erect, girls; the wind blows fairly strong and they will serve as sails. Drift out into the open lake, and trust in God for your rescue. Good-by."

The girls grasped the bushes, and, even as he spoke, the novel sails caught the breeze, the little craft crept slowly out from the shore, and then, as it received the full strength of the wind, went scudding away over the rippling waters, its green sails rustling in the wind, its white-faced occupants silent and sad.

Before the enemy had discovered what was going on behind the rocks and bushes on the lake-shore, the boat was fully two hundred yards away. A yell of dismay, and a volley of shots at the fleeing craft, announced the villain's depth of rage. A few bullets fell dangerously near to the canoe, and the firing was kept up, the leaden missiles whistling over the heads of Dan and Tom, until the craft had drifted out beyond range into the now rapidly-deepening shadows of night.

Unburdened by the girls and poor Harry West, the two heroic mountaineers took a position in a kind of grotto in the face of the bluffs and awaited the final onslaught.

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE BLACK HAWKS' NEST.

So silent and quick had been the movements of Old Tom Rattler, in his attack on Lord John Joseph Keswick, that the latter did not even get a glimpse of the hunter's face. Down among the bushes and vines he sunk, and it was well these same bushes and vines were there to break his fall, else his forced leap might have resulted seriously. As it was, he reached the ground quite easily, barring numerous scratches on hands and face, and a somewhat demoralized suit. Extricating himself from the vines, he crawled toward the bank along the base of which there was a space barren of vegetation.

There he paused to consider the extent of his injuries, get his bearings, and moralize upon the uncertainty of life in the American wilds. It was quite dark where he sat, which was not only owing to the gathering shadows of evening, but to the dense canopy of vegetation that hung over him like an awning.

"Not long, however, did his lordship tarry there. He arose and crept along the base of the cliff some thirty rods or more, when he emerged into a more open space, though that same green awning hung over him. The sound of a footstep fell upon his ear, and, at the same moment, a gruff voice commanded:

"Halt! throw up your hands!"

Turning quickly, the old tourist saw a man with a cocked revolver standing in the black mouth of a cavern which led back into the bluff.

"Beg pardon!" his lordship exclaimed, quickly raising his hands as commanded; "I 'ope I'm not hintruding."

"What the de'il ye spyin' 'round arter, then?" growled the man.

"I ham 'ere by haccident, sir; by haccident; I was tossed hover the bank by some blarsted Hamerican—"

"Who be you, anyhow?" demanded the man, impatiently.

"Lord John J. Keswick, of Hengland, sir, touring in Hamerica, and a beastly place hit is, by Jove!"

"Whew!" ejaculated the cavern's guardian; "a lord from old England!—a real, way-up, eye-glassed, dew-dawed lord! Well, my Lord Kisswicked, you'll please walk right into the Black Hawks' Nest, and when Captain Dago comes around he'll examine your passport. Walk right in and make yourself to hum."

"Ah, thanks!" said Lord John, advancing into the cavern, with a dignified step.

It was dark enough at the entrance, but, after he had penetrated a few paces into the passage, the glare of a light burst upon his eyes. Within its radius, seated upon a rude bench or stool, he saw a young and beautiful woman, who, at a glance, he recognized as Roxana Kline, the handsome daughter of the proprietor of The Fodder-Corral at Red Notch Camp! But, whatever his thoughts and feelings upon making this startling discovery, he succeeded most admirably in keeping them to himself.

The cavern was large and roomy, its extremities and angles being lost in darkness. The only wall visible was the one near which the lamp hung. It was full of holes and pockets, into which were crowded articles of clothing, suspicious-looking packages, and bundles. Firearms, saddles, pots and kettles were strewn about in profusion and disorder.

Keswick was conducted straight to where Roxy Kline sat reading a book. As they approached she arose, though the look and expression upon her face could not be observed, for her back was to the light.

"Miss Roxy Kline," said the old tourist's captor, addressing the woman, "permit me to introduce Lord John Joseph Jackson Keswick, English tourist, whom I war compelled to run into our den. Miss Kline, me lord, is an honored captive here, held for a bit of a ransom, and you can consider yourself a prisoner, also, until Captain Dago looks into the merits of your case."

"Ah! by Jove!" exclaimed Keswick, "then I ham in a nest of Hitalian brigands and cut-throats!"

"You're in the Black Hawks' Nest, sure," answered the man, "and any attempt to escape will be death. Don't forget that," and with this reminder the outlaw-guardian returned to the mouth of the cave.

"Oh, by Jove! this is 'orrid—'orrid, my dear madam!" the old Englishman exclaimed;—"a prisoner in Hamerica—the land hof the free and the 'ome hof the brave!"

"It is indeed, dreadful, my lord," said Roxy Kline, her voice full of sadness and grief. "I was on my way to visit my young friend, Little Puss, the daughter of Hermit Paul, when I fell into these wicked Black Hawks' power. But, how unfortunate that you, too, should fall into their hands."

"Beg pardon, my dear lady, but at first I regarded it has very unfortunate hindeed, but since I fall into your presence and company also, I deem it a bit hof fortune."

"I do not understand you, my lord," said Roxy.

"I mean hit will be a pleasure for me to share your himprisonment with you," he explained. "Beg pardon, madam, but since I first met you at Red Notch your face has ever been before me."

"Oh, sir," exclaimed Roxy in little confusion, "you are jesting, I am sure."

"'Pon honah, my dear lady, I tell you the solemn truth. I 'ave seen a deal hof this world, and been smiled hupon by the fairest women hof many climes, but none—no, not one 'as ever won my affection until I met you! And now, since I 'ave said this much, pardon me, hif I say all: I know I 'ave been habrupt, but it is the circumstances hunder which we now meet that forces the issue. We are prisoners in this hawful dungeon. You are held for ransom. I love you, by Jove, I do! I am rich. You are beautiful and charming. I can ransom you, and I will! Be mine, dear lady, and you shall never want or—"

"But, my lord—"

"Hear me through, dear girl," he persisted. "As my wife, you will be mistress hof one hof the grandest old mansions hof Hingland, and one hof the leading ladies hof the land. Your beauty and charming manners will hadmit you to royal favors—you'll shine as the brightest hof bright stars. My wealth will be at your command. Your wish shall be law in our mansion. Just think of it, dear lady, a moment and then answer me."

"My lord, I am a young woman, while you are—"

"Sixty, dear lady," he quickly put in, "but, by Jove! I have the spirit of a boy of thirty." "Then I am but the daughter of a poor tavern-keeper, while you are a refined English nobleman," Roxy demurred.

"Don't let that thought trouble you, dear girl," the persistent old lover replied; "risk your happiness in my keeping, hand, by the gods! hit will be sacredly guarded."

"My lord," the girl said, after a moment's deep thought, "I may be a foolish, flattered woman, but my lot has been such a hard one these past few years that the prospects of a happier and more pleasant life and home are strong temptations for me to risk my life in the keeping of one of whom I know but little, and yet one whom my better judgment tells me is worthy of the love of any woman in the land."

"Ah! thanks, dear lady, a thousand thanks! Shall I consider your words as a favorable answer?"

"You may, my lord," Roxy answered, in a voice of joyous timidity.

"Appy day! appy day!" exclaimed the old wooer, and dropping on his knee before her he lifted her hand to his lips and imprinted a resounding kiss upon it.

And just then a loud and boisterous laugh rung through the cavern, and the sound of many feet were heard approaching.

CHAPTER VII.

SLIGHTLY SURPRISED.

As the gallant Lord Keswick arose to his feet, after kissing the woman's hand, he found himself confronted by four rough, brigandish-looking men whose faces were aglow with mirth.

One of the four was Captain Dago, leader of the notorious outlaw gang known in Northern Idaho and Washington Territory as the Black Hawks. He was a tall, dark-skinned man of fifty—an Italian by birth, and a brigand by nature.

Lord Keswick was the first to speak.

"I beg pardon, gentlemen," he said, showing some confusion.

"Granted, sir," responded Captain Dago, "but, this beats all the romance ever conceived by the poets. A real British lord—Lord J. Joseph Keswick, we were told by the guard, in our den, makin' howlin' old love to our fair prisoner! But, my lord, I congratulate you on your success."

"Thanks, sir," exclaimed Keswick, with a polite bow.

"I say, my lord," said one of the Black Hawks confronting the old tourist, "I'm somethin' of an Englishman myself, and used to know Lord Henry Keswick, but never heard of John Joseph Keswick."

"And what might your name be, if you please?" asked his lordship.

"It used to be Wyatt; but I'm 'Reddy' now, for short," was the man's answer.

"And you knew Lord Henry Keswick?"

"Yes, I did, ole hoss, and I hope you're not an impostor," "Reddy" responded.

"Beg pardon, Mr. Wyatt, but when did you leave old Hengland?"

"Ten years ago."

"Ah! that explains why you didn't know me," Lord John responded. "Lord Henry was my elder brother. He died seven years ago. Thirty years before he died I went to India, and was serving there when news of his death brought me home. I succeeded to his estate. Did you never hear that he had a brother in India?"

"Come to think, I did," answered Reddy, "and I guess you're all right. Shake, neighbor John Joseph! I'm truly glad to see some one from home. How's Queen Vic? and Prince Al? How's all old England stack up?"

"Oh, charming, charming, sir, when I left, two years ago," responded his lordship, getting on familiar terms with the outlaws. "By Jove! I couldn't be content to settle down and rust, and 'aving a great desire to see Hamerica, I sailed for the blarsted, habominable country."

"Travelin' all alone?"

"Not exactly, sir; my valet accompanied me, and is now somewhere in the blarsted hills."

"But how came you in here?" asked Captain Dago.

The Englishman gave a detailed account of his encounter with the two ruffians in the hills, his being flung over the embankment, and his meeting with the guard at the mouth of the cavern. But whether he told the facts in the case, is a matter that does not concern us at this time.

"By Judas!" exclaimed Captain Dago, after Keswick had concluded his thrilling narrative, "I'm of the opinion the two fellows you belted

over the head were our men. If so, they'll make life burdensome to you when you meet again."

"I ham your guest, and claim your protection," Keswick said. "I honly bacted the part of an Hinglish gentleman in rescuing the young lady from them."

"And the feller that fired you over the bank acted likewise, I suppose?" observed Reddy.

"No, sir; I beg pardon; he was an Hamerican blackguard, sir—a sneak that struck from behind."

"Well, I reckon you understand you're a prisoner here, my lord?" the outlaw chief remarked.

"As much has been hintimated; what are your terms, sir?"

"Ah-ha!" exclaimed Dago, rubbing his hands in delight, "that sounds refreshing, my lord! But let me see: you admitted to your affianced that you were lousy rich—that you were wallowing in wealth. Now, in view of this fact, we'll have to tax you about as follows: we'll say one thousand pounds for the release of your charming little sweetheart; about two thousand for your experience in the American wilds, and then it will take another thousand to mollify the feelings of the two fellows you clipped over the head, if they prove to be our men, and turn up alive—four thousand pounds, all told, seems to me dirt cheap considering everything."

"By Jove!" exclaimed the Englishman, with a show of indignation; "that's houltrageous, sir, houltrageous!"

"We're one-priced folks here, my lord—never cut on prices. It's four thousand, or you'll never tread the halls of your English mansion, or chuck your young wife under the chin."

"Blarst it! you drive a man hard, sir; but you 'ave the hadvantage and—"

"And you the wealth," interrupted Dago.

"If I'm to stay here, 'ow the deuce can I get you the money?"

"Oh, easy enough, my lord. Draw an order on your banker, and have the remittance made to you by Express, at, say, Missoula, in care of Samuel J. Hobart. We'll see that it is got from the office and brought here in good shape. Order the remittance in currency; don't forget that."

"Then I will draw on the Montreal Bank, where I 'ave a credit for—for that hamount."

"Good! that'll only take a couple of weeks to get returns, and will cut short your sojourn with us. Now don't think you can deceive us, for you can't. My secretary here, 'Reddy,' will conduct you to our library, and see that you give the proper order on your bankers. You see, we understand commercial business here, we do, and make sure our net brings fish."

At this juncture three more outlaws entered the cavern. Two of them were the men Keswick had thumped on the head. Their heads were bandaged and their faces and clothing covered with blood.

Their joy knew no bounds when they discovered their enemy a prisoner in their den, and direful were the threats they made against him. But when Dago informed them that he had assessed his lordship a thousand for the self-admitted blows, their feelings were, as predicted, somewhat mollified.

The third new-comer was the band's messenger, who had come in from somewhere, bringing a supply of newspapers which at once claimed the attention of Captain Dago and most of his men. They seemed eager to hear from the rest of the world, and especially the illustrated part of it.

Reddy, the commercial man of the band, lighted a small lamp and bade Keswick follow him. He led the way down nearly to the mouth of the cavern, when he turned to the right and entered a side chamber or passage quite narrow. Through this they passed some ten paces when they debouched into a little circular chamber, brilliant with stalactites.

At one side there was a couch of furs and blankets. There were two or three rude chairs. Some clothing hung on the walls, and a few small boxes and packages of some kind were in view. A heavy blanket hung over the entrance to the room.

"Ah! a deuced nice chamber!" declared his lordship, as the brilliant points overhead, and the flashing flakes of mica on the walls, fairly dazzled his eyes.

"It's our business office," explained Reddy, placing the lamp on a little projecting rock that answered for a shelf. "Be seated there, my lord."

Keswick took a seat. Reddy fished out from the head of the couch a little rosewood secre-

tary which he placed on his lordship's lap, saying:

"In that, my lord, is paper, pen, ink, and everything necessary in a first-class business office. You will proceed to make your order on the Bank of Montreal for four thousand pounds in currency. Order it sent to you, at Hausel Junction, instead of Missoula, as the captain suggested, in the care of Russell Wyatt, instead of Hobart. The Express-agent at the Junction is an old chum of mine, and I'll have no trouble in getting the money when it comes. You might say, in a postscript to your banker, that you propose making an investment in American property, which will be true, since the fair Roxy Kline is to be your reward."

"By Jove! you fellers are deuced sharp, you are!" declared Keswick, with a sickly laugh; "but here goes."

His lordship began to write. Reddy sat facing him, a grim smile of satisfaction on his red, sinister face as he watched the pen go wabbling across the paper in a jerky, nervous way.

It required but a few minutes for the distinguished old prisoner to finish the order, and the postscript as directed, and then he handed it over to Reddy to inspect, saying as he did so:

"See if that covers the ground satisfactorily."

Reddy looked it over a time or two.

"Well, I guess that will answer," he began; but he did not finish the sentence. As he lifted his eyes from the paper and glanced at the prisoner, his face blanched and his eyes almost started from their sockets; for he found himself looking into the muzzle of a big-mouthed derringer in the hand of his lordship, whose elbow rested upon the secretary on his lap.

"One word or one move, Russell Wyatt, and you're a dead man!" said the old tourist, in a changed voice full of deadly meaning, to which the glitter of his gray eyes gave terrible emphasis; "I'm Kit Bandy, the Mountain Detective, by the horn o' Joshua!"

CHAPTER VIII.

OFF INTO THE MOUNTAINS.

RUSSELL WYATT, as we will hereafter know the outlaw, "Reddy," was completely thunder-struck—paralyzed. He could not have spoken if he had desired ever so much to do so. The deadly derringer within ten inches of his head, the gleaming eyes behind it, and the stern-set features of his supposed lordship were all sufficient to convince him that he was confronted by a bold, desperate and cunning man, who was playing a bold and desperate game characteristic of the notorious Kit Bandy, of whom he had heard much, but never had the pleasure of meeting before.

Old Kit, for he the English lord in reality was, had played his cards well. He could read the man before him like an open book. He knew the helpless state of his mind and body, and hastened to take advantage of it before a reaction set in. Reaching over with his left hand he lifted the outlaw's weapons from his belt and shoved them into his own boot-tops. Then he arose and exchanged his hat for one that hung on the wall. He also donned an outlaw's coat, and then said:

"Now, Russell Wyatt, you must go with me from this place. You must lead the way from this cave. If the guard challenges us as we go out you must satisfy him. I shall follow at your heels, and if you attempt to give me away I will plug you. Your friends are engaged at the upper end of the cave. It has been night outside for two hours. Life may not be worth much to you, but if you care to live, you want to walk in the straight and narrow way. Kit Bandy is not to be monkeyed with. So lead the way."

Wyatt obeyed as implicitly as though under mesmeric influence, which was really about the condition the fellow was in. He led the way into the narrow passage and down into the main chamber, Old Kit grasping his arm. No light reached them from above, and quickly Bandy turned his man toward the exit and hurried him along. They could hear voices in the back chamber, but no one was astir.

They soon came to the guard standing in the deep shadows of the awning of foliage that so effectually concealed the entrance to the cave.

"Where now ye bound for?" he demanded, surlily.

Wyatt seemed to hesitate. Bandy pressed the fellow's arm, and he answered:

"Outside."

There were no strict rules about members passing out, and so the two walked on out into the valley. The moon was high in the heavens and her beams fell full upon the two men.

"Step lively, Wyatt," Bandy now commanded, and the two moved off at a brisk walk.

Up to this time the entrapped outlaw had entertained strong hopes of escape. Vigilant as he knew his friends to be, he thought it impossible for the old detective to carry out his unparalleled scheme without discovery. But it was the very boldness of the act that had disarmed the guard, and Wyatt now inwardly cursed himself for his quiet submission when he had a chance for escape.

That chance, however, was now gone. He could see, as they moved along, that Bandy kept that murderous derringer pointed toward him, his finger on the trigger. So he could do nothing but go quietly and watch his chance. But this apparent submission did not cause Bandy to relax his vigilance one moment. He had often dealt with such fellows before, and was not to be caught napping, as the Black Hawks had been.

Down that valley for a mile or two they went, then they turned to the right into another, which they followed awhile, and again switched into first one defile and then another until they had traveled at least five miles, Old Kit all the time following his man, holding firmly to the outlaw's belt with his left hand.

Finally a halt was ordered under the brow of a beetling cliff where the shadows lay deep. Old Kit gave a low, prolonged whistle, and was immediately answered from the darkness by a short, shrill chirrup.

"This way, Ichabod!" then called out the old detective. "Bring the darbies, for I've got our man."

At this juncture Wyatt was detected in an attempt to unbuckle his belt in front, but the pressure of cold steel against his jaw caused him to desist, and warned him that his captor was not to be deceived, even in the darkness.

Ichabod Flea approached from under the cliff with a pair of handcuffs, and proceeded to shackle the Black Hawk; but this was not to be done without trouble. The villain determined to make one desperate effort for liberty. With an oath he leaped backward against Bandy with such force that the old detective was capsize, but holding on to the outlaw's belt, the result was that Wyatt stumbled and fell over him.

A desperate struggle ensued, but the outlaw was no match for the two wiry old mountaineers, and he was soon overpowered and handcuffed.

Wyatt's rage now broke forth. He made the defile ring with his execrations, until the detective proceeded to gag him, which of course shut off all noise.

Quiet being restored, the prisoner was conducted to a secluded place under the cliff and permitted to sit down.

"Here, Wyatt," said Old Kit, "we'll sojourn a few hours, and then start southward. You may wonder why I brought you here alive, when, after gettin' out of your den, I could have dropped you, and had no further trouble. But the fact is, I wanted you. For you, above all others, have yearned, and I was puzzled at one time to-night how I was ever to get possession of you, surrounded as you were by friends. But that order on the Montreal bank, that secluded little library, and the fact of your being the commercial business man of the gang, all conspired to work right into my hands like things do in a novel. But, I say you're wanted—wanted away over the ocean in Old England, the home of your childhood."

"For what?" growled the discomfited Hank, as if he half-suspected what the old detective meant.

"I'll tell you, Wyatt," Kit answered, "seeing you might be able to make some things a little clear before you quit America, and thereby make your punishment lighter. In other words, you can turn State's evidence."

"You've reference to that confounded Sir Isaac Hull affair, haven't you?" queried the prisoner.

"Exactly, Russell," responded Kit. "You catch on like a burr to a cow's tail—you do, by the horn o' Joshua! But I'll go over the whole story to refresh your memory:

"Sir Isaac Hull was a wealthy old Britisher, and as mean and parsimonious as he was rich. He had a son, Alfred, and a daughter, Mary. He made life a burden for his family. One day he drove Alfred from home and swore he would thereafter disown him.

"Alfred was a fine, plucky lad, and he came to America and struck out for himself. By and by Mary died, and finally old Isaac deviled his poor wife into her grave. Then the old tyrant finally took sick and died himself.

"But upon his deathbed a pang of remorse touched up his conscience like a sharp stick. He repented of his treatment of his boy, and tried to get him home before he died, but Alfred could not be found. In the mean time, he made a will, bequeathing everything to his son, or, if he was dead, his issue, if any. In that will he named two men, Leander Warren, barrister, and Phelix Hopley, Esq., as executors of his will. They had been old friends of his, and possessed some of his meanness.

"Wal, Sir Isaac shuffled off the mortal coil, and then the executors went to work to find Alfred. The last heard of him he was in the United States. They came over in person and had a fly time at the expense of the estate, for they were fly fellows. But they finally got trace of Alfred. They found that he had married an American girl in Ohio, ten years before, and then moved West. They followed up and learned that Alfred was dead—that he had left a widow and one child—a little girl. But the widow had married again, and had gone with her husband and child—no one knew where, so the story goes.

"Now, when Leander and Phelix discovered this much, the devil that was born in their hearts began to assert itself, and they conspired to set up a false heir to Sir Isaac's estate. They had no trouble in finding a woman of the proper age willing to enter into their scheme. She was a beautiful Circe of St. Louis. She had a daughter fourteen years of age who was to be presented as the child of Alfred Hull.

"This much accomplished, they must have witnesses to identify in court, the women as the widow and child of Alfred. In you, Russell Wyatt, and one Rodger Gray, both Englishmen by birth and rascals by nature, they found willing witnesses for so much cash, and passage to and from England.

"Ample proofs of Alfred's marriage were obtained from the Ohio records, and after some months spent in New York coaching the women and the witnesses as to their parts to be played in the courts of England, the hull band sailed for the British Isle, and, as there was no one contesting the widow's claim to the estate, the impostor and her daughter were duly installed in Sir Isaac's mansion, and with the reward of your work you and Gray returned to America to continue your criminal career.

"The executors, Leander and Phelix, were to look after the affairs of the estate until little Lady Jane Hull was of age—and they did so most devotedly—so devotedly that the gay Leander finally concluded to marry the widow so that he could be constantly on the grounds to look after affairs. Phelix, poor man, had a wife already, else he might have married the daughter and been installed also at the manor.

"Things run along in this way for two or three years, when trouble began to brew. Phelix mistrusted that Leander was not allowing him his share of the yearly income, and, by and by, there was a ruction between the two. Phelix threatened to expose the whole conspiracy unless Leander did the fair thing as per agreement. So, one day, when they were out gunning, they quarreled like Satan and sin, and Leander filled Phelix's dissipated carcass full of buckshot, and left him for dead. A gamekeeper came along and found him on the ragged edge and carried him home. Phelix sent for a detective, and divulged the hull affair from A to Izzard.

"But, the detective kept mum, and I presume Leander and his St. Loo confederate are still flying high on Sir Isaac's heath, unconscious of the coils gatherin' round them.

"The detective went to work at once to hunt up Alfred's true wife and daughter; also, the witnesses, Wyatt and Gray, who proved such magnificent tools of the conspirators—"

"And you expect me to criminate myself—swear myself into prison, eh?" broke in the shackled outlaw.

"Not exactly, Mr. Wyatt," returned Bandy. "Gray is now in jail in Denver, and 's dyin' to turn State's evidence. He confessed to me the whole plot, and put me on your track. He wants you to enjoy the fun with him. He also told me, by the way, that you and him were thinking of going to England on a visit soon, and, in view of the hard times here, draw on the Sir Isaac outfit, and if they refused to shell out handsomely, to expose the conspiracy and bring forward the true heir of Alfred Hull. He said that you knew exactly where to lay hands on Alfred's child—that his wife, who'd married a second time, was dead.

"And now, Russell, I can almost insure you immunity from severe punishment if you'll straighten this matter all up squarely. A de-

tective from Scotland Yard has been in America some six months looking for the actors in the affair. He called on me and my pard here, to assist him, and, as Lord John Joseph Keswick I drew upon your failings—failings so characteristically sympathetic in an Englishman the world over, and it worked to a dot."

"Well, I know all about that dirty affair," confessed the outlaw; "I know where Alfred Hull's daughter is, also; but, I'm goin' to keep my secret until I have some assurance that I'm not to rot in an English prison, nor—"

"By snakes!" suddenly broke in Ichabod Flea, as the report of a rifle in the direction of Lake Kaniksu came reverberating through the hills, "there's shootin' going on over toward the lake!"

"Ah!" exclaimed the prisoner, as if a thought had suddenly struck him, "to-night an attack is to be made on Hermit Paul, whose cabin is on the lake, provided he does not leave before, as he has been warned to. He has a daughter, Kit Bandy—a fair and lovely girl whose soul and body are worth the saving. I would have been on my way there long ere this, but for your performance. If that girl's life is sacrificed to red-skin barbarity you'll be held responsible, old man. And, if I am your prisoner, sir, I advise you to hasten at once to the cabin of Hermit Paul, and warn him that, between midnight and morning, a band of savages will attack his home."

Old Kit, whose keen powers of perception were seldom at fault, detected a hidden meaning in the man's words, but, without evincing any concern in his advice, finally told Ichabod to take care of the prisoner, and he would make a reconnaissance in the direction whence the report of the rifle had come. But, when he left, his objective point was the cabin of Hermit Paul.

CHAPTER IX.

GUILLOTINED.

WE left Cœur D'Alene and Tom Rattler by the lake shore awaiting the attack of the outlaws and red-skins. But more eagerly did they hope for the coming of darkness, under whose friendly cover they might escape the enemy altogether. The fate of their friends adrift on the lake made them restless and impatient, and the course they had determined upon, should they elude the foe, was to hasten to Hermit Paul's cabin, procure a boat and go in search of those sent adrift.

Grave fears, however, were entertained of the enemy getting in ahead of them. The escape of the girls upon the lake was known to them, and both knew that no effort would be spared by the foe to find them.

To the happy surprise of the hunters, night fell without any demonstration on the part of the foe. In fact, they had begun to entertain doubts as to the enemy being anywhere in that vicinity. It was barely possible that they had stolen off to where they had canoes secured, and gone in pursuit of the girls and Harry West.

At any rate, the hunters determined to be off, and so they crept from the grotto along the base of the bluff, Old Tom Rattler taking the lead.

Silent as a shadow the old hunter glided away, and so rapidly that the first thing Cœur D'Alene Dan knew his friend was out of sight and sound in the darkness!

Not daring to call to him, and knowing Rattler was too discreet to do so, he resolved to make the best of it and hurry along alone, hoping that he might rejoin him soon—at Hermit Paul's cabin, at any rate.

To Dan nearly every acre of the lake country was known; therefore he had no difficulty in shaping his course, and when assured of being out of immediate danger, he moved along more rapidly in the direction of the Hermit's cabin.

When about a mile from the home of the recluse, his ear caught the sound of human voices. He stopped and listened. The sound came from the woods before him. Stealthily he crept toward it. He soon gained a point from whence he could hear a voice speaking in angry tones—pouring out terrible blasphemy and murderous threats.

Was it upon Tom Rattler's head that those terrible curses were to fall? Had the old man fallen into the outlaws' hands, after all?

As Cœur D'Alene Dan asked himself these questions he crept closer, guided by the speaker's voice. He came soon to the edge of a little opening, upon which the moonbeams fell full and bright, and there he beheld a strange sight.

In the center of the opening stood a tall man, with both hands lifted heavenward. Dan recognized him in a moment as Lord Keswick, whom he had met at Red Notch! On the side of the glade next to the hunter stood three men, each with a revolver leveled full upon the old tourist. One of them was still pouring out his wrath, and this much Dan caught, for he was now within fifteen feet of him:

"You played it fine, you miserable, 'ristocratic old sneak! I reckon you escaped the 'Nest' by bribin' 'Reddy' with your wealth, and coaxed him off. Oh, my gallant lord! it was a sorry day for you when you struck the Black Hawks' Nest, for your head shall ornament the entrance to our place as a warning to all other English lords. Boys, advance and search the old sinner for weapons."

The two "boys," murderous looking scoundrels, crept, half-crouching, to the side of the old detective, for, as the reader knows, it was Kit Bandy, who, with all his skill and cunning, had been caught and held up in the glade by three of his late captors of the Black Hawks' Nest while on his way to Hermit Paul's cabin.

Full well the old detective knew it would go hard with him if he was ever taken back to the cave, and, as the two men advanced to search him, he made up his mind to watch his chance and make a dash for liberty. But, before that time came, his attention was attracted by a low, gurgling cry from the lips of the outlaw standing in the edge of the shadows; he saw the villain reel backward into the bushes and fall to the earth in the darkness.

The two outlaws searching Bandy ceased their work and glanced after their friend. They heard a strange noise in the bushes, and were puzzled by it. A moment later a dark, spherical object came rolling into the moonlit glade. It came to a stop at the very feet of the trio. An exclamation of horror escaped the lips of the two Hawks, while Old Kit started with a shudder.

It was a human head! The face was upturned in the moonlight, the eyes staring, the muscles still twitching, and jaws hanging agape!

"My God! burst from one of the outlaws' lips, 'it's Opium Bill's head!'"

All this terrible tragedy had occurred in a few brief seconds, and before the horrified Black Hawks or their prisoner could hardly realize what had been done there came to their ears the quick tread of feet, and a man bounded into the opening with the yell of a demon!

The outlaws, already filled with terror, crouching low, fled into the darkness, leaving their pistols lying at Bandy's feet, while the old detective, starting slightly, his long arms descending from aloft and falling limp at his side, exclaimed:

"Cœur D'Alene Dan, by the horn o' Joshua!"

"Yes, my lord," responded the young giant; "the varlets had you rounded up in great shape!"

"Bear-Killer, did you guillotine that critter?" Kit asked, pointing to the ghastly object on the ground.

"Didn't he promise that *your* head should ornament the entrance to his den?" was Dan's evasive answer. "But come! let's get into the shadows, or we may get shot yet. The woods are full of Ingins and outlaws."

"Dan," said the old man, as they entered the woods, his voice entirely changed, "I am Kit Bandy, and no more lord than a baboon!"

"What?" and Dan stopped short, "you Kit Bandy, the Mountain Detective?"

"I am, Dan'l, by the horn o' Joshua! though I hate to confess the fact after bein' caught in such a condemned, sneak-thief pickle as I war in a while ago."

"Well, by the stars above us!" declared Dan, "I am glad to know you are Kit Bandy, though you made a delightful, Jo-dandy old lord. Shake, Kit, and may we ever be friends! An old hunter ha' been tellin' me just this evenin' about Kit Bandy and his exploits."

"Who was the hunter, Dan'l?"

"Tom Rattler. Do you know him?"

"Know Tom Rattler?—Old Tom Rattler?" exclaimed Kit. "Do I know the voracious, fraudulent, fightin', lyin' Old Tom Rattler? Well, I should smile, Dan'l, I did! And so Tom—Old Tom is in these parts?"

"I became separated from him about two hours ago."

"Horn o' Joshua! It'll do my soul good to grasp that old measly pirate's hand once more, and feel the air palpitate with some of the ancient runt's sonorous yarns."

"From what he was telling me, I think he met you yesterday. He said he'd rescued Miss Alma Grayson from a man calling himself Lord

Keswick, so Alma told him. He said he flung the fellow over an embankment—"

"Ram's-horn o' Joshua!" burst from Bandy's lips, "was it Old Tom Rattler that flung me over that precipice? Then Bear-Knocker, hold me—suppress me, for if I ever set eyes on Thomas Rattler, the Red River Epidemic will be forever antisepticated. I'm the man that was sent flowing over that rock like a Niagara, and if it hadn't been for the bushes and vines and thorns that I poured into, I reckon I'd now be skippin' in various directions through the hills inside the jackets of wolves. Yes, I was thusly treated after I'd rescued the gal from two p'izen villains, and it war while I war tryin' to keep the scared little heifer from breakin' her neck that I war seized and without even a grunt, tossed over the precipice. And to think that that old mummy, Tom Rattler, did it! Waugh!"

"But, Bandy, you wrong him," Dan expostulated; "he didn't know it was you—didn't recognize you in your strange attire. He thought you the girl's enemy."

"He'd done it all the quicker if he'd knowed it war me. It's just like him, Dan'l; he never would play fair with me when thar was a gal in the boat, so to speak. But he'll know me when we meet again, for I'll animate his carcass when I git hold o' him till he'll think he's been pumped full o' the Elixir o' Life! But, Dan, do you know what become of that gal, Alma?"

"I do, Kit," Dan answered, and then as briefly as possible narrated the story of their adventures up to the time he and Rattler became separated.

"By the horn o' Joshua!" the old detective exclaimed, "that is a sad state of affairs, the gals and wounded man adrift on Kaniku under this night! He war a splendid, fine young man, Dan'l, but woefully taken in on that fair siren, Roxy Kline, of Red Notch."

"I mistrust, Kit, she's his affianced wife, despite your valet's story of her having attempted to shoot him."

"The fool man!" blurted Kit. "She's engaged to me, too!"

"To you?"

"Yep," and Bandy indulged in a chuckling laugh; "to-day, when I was Tom Rattlered over the bank, I finally was brought up standin' in the mouth of a cave which proved to be the Black Hawks' Nest."

"You don't tell me, Kit!" exclaimed Dan.

"Yes; and I was roped into that den, and thar I found sweet Roxy Kline, a prisoner. She sat alone when I was ushered into her presence, reading the sad, pathetic story of the life of Jesse James. She was bein' held for ransom, à la Italian—brigands—Erin-go-bragh! As Lord Keswick, with haydoogins of wealth, I made love to her right there and then—shot straight from the shoulder, Dan'l. I told her I'd ransom her if it bu'sted the Bank o' England, and make her queen o' the universe. Oh, I laddled out love to her equal to Old Tom Rattler a-lyin', and I won her consent to become Lady John Joseph Roxy Keswick."

"You were cruel, Kit, cruel to deceive the poor girl—to take advantage of her there," Dan said, in mock asperity.

"Ha, ha, ha!" softly laughed the old detective; "whar youthfulness is bliss," he went on, "it's folly to be old. Boy, you say Harry West is a detective lookin' out for opium smugglers. Now, if he'll look into his own condition, he'll find his heart has been smuggled as well as opium."

"What do you mean, Kit?"

"That outlaw rendezvous is headquarters for all the rascals in Idaho. Freebooters, horse-thieves, train-robbers and opium smugglers all 'nest' there. It's their storehouse, and I'll bet there's several thousand pounds o' opium in there this minute, besides other goods that's been run over from British America waiting a chance to run into American markets. And that played out minin'-camp, Red Notch, is only a relay station for the gang, and the fair Roxy is queen o' the hull dimmed caboodle!"

"Impossible, Kit, impossible!" declared Cœur D'Alene Dan.

"You'll see, boy, you'll see! She's a holy screamer from 'way, 'way over yan. She doubtless got onto Harry's detective racket, and tried to slug him through the window. Boy, she's a charmin', deceitful woman—a siren of sirens. I'll bet her victims are haydoogins. What fools men are—young men 'specially!"

"Kit, it seems impossible that Roxy Kline can be such a wicked girl," Bear-Slayer persisted.

At this juncture the two hunters emerged from the woods into a smooth stretch of sandy beach extending back from the lake several

rods. It was devoid of vegetation, except a fringe of grass along the water's edge, and as the moonbeams fell a-slant upon it, and walking was easier, the hunters concluded to follow it.

"As I war sayin'," Bandy remarked, as they moved along the beach, "young men are terrible fools sometimes 'bout a pretty face. I, Ka-ristopher Kolumbuss Bandy was once a young man and a fool. In an evil hour I fell in love with Sabina Ellen Frisby, and by her was led to the hyenal altar. I built a noble mansion on the classic Chugwater. The walls were of beautiful, variegated sod cut from the green bosom of the valley, and laid in golden yellow mud mortar. The roof was of as beautiful grass as ever rustled in a summer breeze, or concealed in its depths a skulkin' coyote. Steps of Parian marble quarried right there were at the door. On a graveled hearth—with a beautiful smoke-hole in the center of the roof—was ever kept burning a cheerful fire, whose light at night brought out the gorgeousness of the groined ceiling and the lovely frescoed walls. The floor was covered with a Brussels carpet of bear-skins, and the furniture was ekally elaborate."

"Into this palatial home I took my bride, and for a few short days all went lovely as the stars in their course. Then trouble began. Sabina grew jealous of Sarah Ann Stump, a neighbor's daughter—a little girl of eighteen only—whom I kissed once, or twice, or three times in a playful manner when she came to our house one day to borrow my revolver to attend a dance up at Bain's Ranch. From that day on things grew from bad to worse."

"Sabina undertook to discipline me one day, and the water was so hot that I slipped one-fourth of my cuticle like a snake. For breathin' spells I just had to run over to neighbor Stump's every few days. Sarah Ann made good salves, and laid it in my wounds with tender hands and deep solicitude."

"One day I stayed longer than usual, and Bina mounted our mule, Jehosaphat, and rode down after me. I was ready to start when she came, and when we started home, I put a little, round cactus under the mule's tail, and if ever you saw a mule go clatterin' over territory it war that same Jehosaphat. When I arriv' home, Bina was there to greet me. I didn't get out again for a month. It was the worst lay-up I ever had, and when I *did* get up, I shook the dust o' the Chugwater from my moccasins, and sought the more congenial society of bears, and Ingins, and outlaws fer perfection. Ah! Sabina was a holy stem-winder, Dan'l!"

"Your experience," said Dan, with a broad smile upon his face, "was, indeed, a lively one. But then, you should not judge all women by Sabina. By the way, Kit, here seems to be a fresh track in the sand goin' our way. It may be Tom Rattler's."

"If it looks like the track o' a bear walkin' on its hind legs, or a buffalo wallow, it's old Tom's track, and—"

"Kit Bandy, prepare to die!"

It was a deep, sepulchral voice that uttered these words from the depths of the bushes fringing the beach, and as the hunters glanced in the direction whence the sound had emanated, they saw Tom Rattler step from the bushes with leveled rifle.

"Hold, Tom!" shouted Cœur D'Alene Dan; but, even as he spoke, the hunter's rifle cracked, a bullet tore through the air, and Kit Bandy dropped to his knees, while down the beach behind them a frightful yell of agony trailed out through the night.

CHAPTER X.

FACING DEATH.

For a moment Cœur D'Alene Dan was fairly paralyzed. He was sure Tom Rattler had shot Bandy, for he heard the bullet and saw the old mango down upon his knees. But, the yell of agony behind him dissipated that fear when, glancing back, he saw two or three red-skins running across the beach toward the woods, carrying the body of a brave who had been slain by Rattler's shot fired directly over his and Bandy's head. And, before the foe had reached the cover of the woods, the intrepid old hunter had sent another shot after them.

Springing to his feet, having taken in the situation at a glance, Old Kit exclaimed:

"Tom Rattler, by the horn o' Joshua! Come forth, lurkin assassin, that I may destroy you!"

With a broad smile upon his wrinkled face, his eyes twinkling with delight, Old Tom Rattler advanced with extended hand, saying:

"Kitsie, bless your piratical old soul, shake!" The two old bordermen fairly embraced each

other, and for several moments all else was forgotten in the joy of their meeting.

"And so we have act'ly met once more," Rattler finally observed; "I wor just thinkin' t'other day, Kitsie, that you war prob'ly in the Infirmary for the Old and Decrepit, if you weren't in the penitentiary somewhar. But, here you be, still frisky as a mule colt and uglier than ever."

"Are ye through, Tom? If so, permit me to slide in the observation," returned Kit, "that I never expected to see you alive ag'in. Several weeks ago I found a dried and withered carcass over in the mountains, and near it war an old gun with 'T R' cut on the stock. I thought the face war yours, only it war better lookin', and with tears I buried it in a bear wallow. But it must 'a' been the carcass o' a kangaroo."

"Likely, Kitsie, very likely," responded Old Tom with a chuckle, "but, what does all this style mean?—velvet coat, dude pants, and high boots? What ye tryin' to act like, now, pard?"

"Tom Rattler!" demanded Kit in a tragic tone, "didst thou ever see me in this garb before? Didst thou not, with jackal cunning and jackass stealth, creep up behind this suit and the man in it, and rob him of the maiden he'd gallantly rescued from outlaws, and deliberately and with malice aforethought, throw this suit and the man in it over a precipice? Speak, Tom Rattler! tell the truth once more if you dost suffocate by doin' it!"

"And so the man war killed, as he'd ought to 'a' been, and you robbed him o' his suit, eh?" was the evasive answer of Old Tom, as a startling truth flashed through his mind.

"No, sir; I was in this suit when it went over the heights," declared Kit.

"Kitsie, I didn't know it war you," confessed Tom, "and as I war in a hurry 'bout that time, I didn't stop to introduce myself. I beg pardon, Kitsie."

"Granted, Tom, this one lonely time. But, by the way, it's a wonder them red varlets didn't attack us as we come up the beach."

"They war layin' for bigger game—perhaps the Red River Epidemic. I saw the skunks crawl out and hide in the water behind that grass, and wonderin' what they were waitin' for, I watched 'em. I reckon, Dan, they were layin' for you, but, when they see'd the great wali-eyed ornegallus, Kit Bandy, with you they were paralyzed."

While all this conversation and badinage was going on, the trio were moving along the lake, and, as they thus continued, they suddenly emerged into a little valley where a sight met their gaze that almost chilled their blood.

It was the sight of a burning building, around which, in the red glare of the roaring flames, could be seen a score or two of savage forms!

"Great heavens! Hermit Paul's cabin is in flames!" burst from Cœur D'Alene's lips.

"Then Wyatt war right; and I am too late!" said Old Kit.

"What do you mean, Kit?"

"I haven't time to explain now," replied Bandy, "for we should hurry up there. We may be in time yet to help the old Hermit in some way."

In this the others coincided; so they pushed rapidly toward the burning cabin, keeping under cover of the timber.

Hermit Paul's cabin stood in the valley a few rods from the edge of a dense woods. For ten years he had resided there with his daughter Kate, or, as she was better known, "Little Puss." He was a hunter and the friend of every man, red or white, who called at his cabin. Nor did he ever question the character of any one who sought shelter under his roof. He was as noble and generous as his daughter was bright and beautiful.

Annually, since he had resided there, a band of Crow Indians came about the first of September to fish and hunt in and about Lake Kaniksu. They brought their wives and children and pitched their camp on the creek about a mile from Paul's cabin. The first time they came a sickness broke out among them that baffled the skill and drums of their Medicine-man. Hermit Paul went among them, administered some simple remedies, and all rapidly recovered. From that time he became known to them as White Medicine, and no man, not even Black Horse, their chief, had more influence over them, or was more highly honored and respected.

These Indians usually remained about two months, and before their departure a certain per cent. of all the saleable hides taken were given to their White Medicine.

All these facts were known to Cœur D'Alene Dan, who had been, of late, a frequent visitor at Hermit Paul's cabin, attracted there, not by the

game around and about Lake Kaniksu, but the pretty face of Little Puss; and, as they proceeded toward the burning building, he made them known to Bandy and Rattler, adding:

"But, at last, the peace and quiet of his home have been broken on the very eve of the annual coming of his Crow friends. He has been expecting them every day, and oh! that they were here!"

"Maybethat'sthem 'round the burnin' cabin," suggested Bandy.

"No," he answered, "it's a horde of red cut-throat Indians made up of Blackfeet, Sioux and renegades—an outlaw band under a white chief named Shaggy Head. They have pitched their encampment on a peninsula in the northeast corner of Lake Kaniksu. That they're in collusion with the Black Hawk gang of outlaws, we've had ocular proof already. Only a few days ago Hermit Paul was warned to leave the valley. The Indians under Shaggy Head claim that they hunted here years before he came, and therefore have a prior right. But in hopes that his friends, the Crow band under Black Horse, would come before they would attempt any hostile movement, he has remained, I fear, too long. And I believe the Black Hawks are at the bottom of it all. He is too honorable a man to be permitted to live in the neighborhood of a bandits' home or rendezvous."

The three finally reached the nearest point that afforded cover, to the burning cabin—not over twenty paces away. Fully a score and a half of Indians and a few white renegades were gathered in front of the blazing hut, and a more murderous and fiendish-looking gang the mountaineers never looked upon.

"Thank God!" suddenly burst from Cœur D'Alene's lips, "Hermit Paul still lives!" and he pointed out to his companions the old hunter, seated at one side, his hands and feet bound, his head bare, and his almost snow-white hair falling to his shoulders.

"A noble-lookin' old man!" said Old Kit.

At sight of the Hermit's face Cœur D'Alene Dan's very soul seemed aroused. His great eyes blazed with an unnatural fire, and his breast fairly heaved with the pent-up storm within. The yells and shouts of the demoniac horde, as the roof or walls of the cabin fell, added new fuel to his wrath, and then, unable to restrain himself longer, he turned to his friends and said:

"Men, if Hermit Paul dies, I will die with him!"

"Boy," admonished Old Tom, "keep cool; the odds are against us."

"I know it, Tom," Dan replied, excitedly, "but I care not! Do not follow me! Wait and watch! You will know when to strike!"

With these words—before his friends could restrain him—the impulsive young giant strode from the shadows into the light of the burning building, and with a revolver in each hand, confronted the murderous gang!

CHAPTER XI.

SHAGGY HEAD MEETS HIS MATCH.

THE boldness of Cœur D'Alene Dan's act in marching into the presence of the Blackfeet and their allies seemed for a moment to fill the savage with stunning surprise. The natural inference was that he was backed in his defiance of their number by a superior force of friends concealed in the darkness of the woods.

A murmur of excitement ran through the crowd, but when it was discovered that he was followed by no friends, a renegade in the rear of the party yelled out:

"It's that big boy-cuss, Cœur D'Alene Dan! Kill him! kill him!"

Instantly there arose a sound like the snarl of many wolves, and as if actuated by a single impulse the crowd swayed toward the big hunter.

But Cœur D'Alene was watching every movement. With his arms extended he moved his cocked revolvers to and fro along the line of foes, his eyes flashing with an unnatural light, and his face rigid in its determined expression.

"Keep back, devils!" he exclaimed, "I will kill the first one of you that raises a hand!"

At this instant Shaggy Head, the chief, stepped out in front of his followers, and waving them back with an imperious gesture, said:

"Leave this man to me," and then to Dan he said, his hand grasping the butt of his revolver hanging at his side: "I am Shaggy Head, the Man-Killer! What seeks the big pale-face hunter here in my presence?"

"I am Cœur D'Alene Dan, the Bear-Slayer," retorted Dan, "and I am here to demand the release of my friend, Hermit Paul!"

A laugh burst from the chief's lips, and it became infectious among his followers. A more atrocious-looking villain Dan Baker had never

faced than that same Shaggy Head. He was a tall, angular fellow with a shock of bushy black hair, and but a single eye that gleamed like a serpent's. His nose was half-gone and his face a mass of hideous scars.

Outlaw and renegade that he was, Shaggy Head had no fears of death. His match in battle he had never met, and he loved to kill and destroy. He knew he was a hideous wretch, and gloried in it; and when he confronted Cœur D'Alene Dan he had expected to overcome the young hunter with awe; but in this he was mistaken.

"Fool!" he roared, seeing his presence made no impression upon the young mountaineer's nerve, "you invite death! You sneer in the face of Shaggy Head! You shall die!"

And having thus proclaimed, the villain threw up his hand with a revolver in it, but quick as he was, Cœur D'Alene Dan was quicker, and the young hunter's weapon cracked and the mighty Man-Killer fell dead, shot through the heart, his own pistol falling unexploded to the ground.

For a moment there was a dead calm; then, as the savages realized that their chief was down, a murderous cry burst from their lips, and as a man they rushed toward the young hunter. But before their cry had died on their lips it was answered from the woods by another—a wild war-whoop, the sound of which caused Hermit Paul to start with a cry of joy, for he recognized it as that of friends. *The Crows had come!*

"The Crows! the Crows!" burst from the lips of some Blackfoot renegade, as two-score of forms came sweeping from the woods with flashing tomahawks, while down upon the right, like twin cyclones, came Kit Bandy and Tom Rattler, their revolvers flashing tongues of flame at every bound.

The Blackfeet were never so surprised, and with the very first shock of battle they recoiled. But over the dead body of their chief they rallied, but even here they stood but for a moment or two before the fiery onslaught of the Crows—just long enough to recover the body of Shaggy Head and bear it away—when they fled in disorder to the woods, leaving most of their killed and wounded on the field, hotly pursued by the victorious Crows.

When, amid the smoke and dust of battle, Tom Rattler saw the form of Cœur D'Alene Dan unharmed, he shouted:

"Hooray! Hooray! the Baby Bear-Killer lives!" and rushing up to Dan he grasped his hand, saying: "Boy, you're a Trojan—a lilly-lipped hummer, by the great Rosycrusians!"

"And the roarin' courage o' a mountain detective," added Kit Bandy, grasping his other hand.

Hermit Paul was quickly relieved of his bonds, and with a voice full of deep emotion poured out a blessing upon the head of Cœur D'Alene Dan, his brave companions, and the Crows, his old-time friends, whose coming had not been a moment too soon.

The scene revealed by the light of the burning cabin was a ghastly one, and was made all the more distressing by the groans and cries of the wounded, of which there were at least a dozen.

One by one the Crows returned from pursuit of their old enemy, the Blackfeet, and hastened to greet their White Medicine-Man, the hermit hunter. From Black Horse, their chief, it was learned that the band had arrived that night at their old camping-ground. A messenger had been dispatched to Hermit Paul's cabin to inform their White Medicine of their arrival, but before he returned they discovered the cabin in flames and heard the yells of the Blackfeet, and at once hurried away to the rescue of their friend.

Almost the first thing Hermit Paul inquired for was his daughter—whether any one had seen her. Cœur D'Alene Dan answered for the party, briefly relating the story of their adventures that day and evening.

"Poor Little Puss!" the half-distracted father sighed, "if she escapes from the lake alive, it will be to find her home in ashes and the many little keepsakes of her father and mother destroyed!"

"Then her father and mother are both dead?" quickly observed Kit Bandy.

"Did I say so?" Hermit Paul asked, with a sudden start.

"You did."

"Ah! then let it be so."

"Then," said Bandy, "she is Alfred Hull's child."

The old hermit started, and, fixing a searching look upon Old Kit, demanded:

"Stranger, who are you?"

"Pardon me, Paul," Cœur D'Alene Dan inter-

ceded, "I had forgotten you men were strangers; this brave old man is Kit Bandy, the Mountain Detective."

"And as royal old buccaneer he is as never told the truth or slit the wattle o' a red-rind," added Old Tom Rattler. "I partly trained him, Hermit Paul, and if he lives a century longer he'll make a fu'st-class rascal-catcher. You can trust him now, I can assure you, long as he's in sight."

"Thomas, will you please button your lip?" asked Bandy; "I'd like to have a few moments aside with Hermit Paul."

The old detective and the hermit walked off to one side, and seating themselves held an hour's conversation.

In the mean time the wounded warriors had all been cared for and sent off to the Crow camp.

Black Horse invited Hermit Paul and the mountaineers to share the hospitality of his camp. The invitation was at once accepted, for the latter were feeling keenly the pangs of hunger.

The Indian camp reached, the best it afforded was given them for supper, and though the fare was coarse, it satisfied their hunger.

By this time the night was well advanced, but there was no rest for the mountaineers. Little Puss and Alma were adrift on the lake with Harry West, for all they knew and much feared, a corpse at their feet, and they must go at once to their rescue.

CHAPTER XII.

THE NIGHT ON THE LAKE.

As Little Puss and Alma drifted out into the lake with the unconscious young detective at their feet, the growing expanse of water and the gathering shadows of night filled Alma's breast with a dread, choking fear. As for Puss, she feared neither water nor darkness, but she was troubled about the condition of Harry West, who had so gallantly risked his life to help them out of danger. Nor was Alma, even in her distress, unmindful of the young man's condition, which had been brought on by exhaustion in carrying her, and dipping her hand in the water she sprinkled his face and bathed his brow. And this she kept up until her kindness was rewarded by seeing Harry open his eyes and gaze up into the starry sky and into her own face.

From this time on Harry began to recover consciousness, though all was deep confusion around him. The blue starry vault overhead, the unbounded expanse of soft moonlight on all sides, the easy, drifting motion of the boat, the gentle rustle of the bush-sails in the lightest of breezes like the flutter of fairy wings, all conspired to fill his bewildered mind with the vague impression that he was in another sphere.

Finally he arose to a sitting posture. This brought him face to face with Little Puss, who at once said:

"Oh, I am so glad you are feeling better!"

"I recognize your face, I believe," he responded, "but I declare I am somewhat confused."

"You fainted, sir," Puss explained, "while fleeing from the Indians with Miss Grayson in your arms. Cœur D'Alene Dan then carried you to the lake and placed you in this boat; and we have been adrift a long time."

"Ah! I begin to remember," he exclaimed; "but what became of the young lady I was carrying?"

"She sits behind you, sir, and has been bathing your head and face this hour or two."

"Excuse me," he said, turning his head and gazing at Alma; "I hope I will get my senses and bearings pretty soon. But where is Cœur D'Alene Dan and Tom Rattler?"

Little Puss told him everything that had transpired from the time he fell up to that minute. Her story straightened him out, but he was not a little surprised by it.

Having told the girls his name, Harry thanked them again and again for their kindness, and promised that as soon as he had got his bearings he would endeavor, by some means or other, to head the canoe shoreward.

"But you must be weak, Mr. West, for you bled quite freely, Alma said."

Harry did not feel his weakness so much as the pain of the wound in the head received at Red Notch. It was a constant reminder of the pretty face of Roxy Kline, who, Peter Grew, Lord Keswick's valet, declared had dealt the blow; and though he could not accept his story he was constantly associating his pain with her face. This fact, coupled with that of his inability to get another interview with her after the shooting, and before he left Red Notch next

morning created a vague suspicion in his mind that had gradually dispelled the infatuation for the handsome girl from his breast.

As they drifted on over the lake Harry taxed his social powers to entertain his fair companions and keep up their spirits.

The shores of the lake had long since receded from view. Only the rugged outlines of the far-off mountain-tops could be seen against the starry sky.

About midnight the breeze died down and the boat stood still upon the waters. But as the night was warm they experienced no unpleasantness from being thus becalmed, and so made merry as possible over the situation.

And thus the remainder of the night was passed, and when morning dawned and the wind arose and set their boat in motion, they felt that the worst was over.

Daylight revealed to them a little island lying directly in their course about half a mile off, and they at once decided to land there a few minutes to rest their cramped limbs and aching bodies.

When at length they touched at the island, Harry leaped ashore to assist his companions out. Little Puss, who was in the prow of the boat rose to her feet and with a laugh dropped back into her seat. Her limbs were so numb that they would not sustain her weight. Harry was about to lift her out when his attention was drawn elsewhere by a sound in the water.

The next instant a canoe, propelled by two paddles, shot like an arrow from around the island and glided alongside their boat. It contained three Blackfoot savages!

A cry of terror escaped the girls' lips at sight of the hideous red-skins, one of whom leaped quickly into their boat, paddle in hand, while the others sprung ashore and attempted to brain the young detective.

But Harry West had his revolver and proceeded to make good use of it, and one of the red pirates fell dead as his feet touched the shore, and the other met a similar fate before he could raise his arm. But by this time the savage in the boat had, with a single stroke of the paddle, driven the craft twenty feet from shore, and with his own body covered by that of Little Puss, plied the blade with all his strength and was soon beyond reach of revolver-shot with the maidens.

Harry durst not risk a shot through fear of hitting one of the girls, and leaping into the red-skins' boat he took up the paddle and gave chase. But he was no match in water-craft for the athletic savage, who doubled the distance between them at every stroke, and at length, through sheer exhaustion, he sunk down in the boat heartsick and discouraged. And thus he lay with burning brain for quite an hour when he was aroused by the dip of paddles and the sound of voices.

Rising to a sitting posture he gazed around him. A boat was approaching. It was not over twenty paces away, and in it were Tom Rattler and Cœur D'Alene Dan.

CHAPTER XIII.

HARRY WEST DISGUSTED.

At sight of the Young Bear-Killer and Old Tom, Harry West experienced a sense of mortification and disgust over his situation. He would rather have faced a dozen red-skins just then than his two friends, for it seemed to him that the story he would have to tell them would be self-conviction of the lack of caution and courage in defending the girls.

However, he greeted them as cheerfully as circumstances would admit, and at once told his story, concluding with the observation:

"Dan, I am thoroughly disgusted with myself. A man may make a fair detective around a city, but as a hunter of opium-smugglers a sad and sorrowful failure. The very first lick I made the rebound knocked me silly; that was at Red Notch."

"In your little love adventure?" asked Dan, with a broad smile.

"Yes," confessed Harry, "I made a blooming fool of myself there, and every step I have taken since has been in the wrong direction."

"That gal hoodooed ye," suggested Old Rattler.

"It seems so," Harry acquiesced, with a sickly smile, "and I mean to get out of this country just as quick as God will let me, and go over to the coast and hire out to pound sand; I know I can do that. I'm done smugler-shadowing."

"Don't git discouraged, boy," advised Old Tom; "it takes experience to make a mountain detective, and that you're havin' from the jump. When you git your heart steeled so a pretty face won't affect it; when you learn to lie

a little, deceive consider'ble, defraud immensely then ye'r' on the way to success as a detective. Go take a few lessons under the immortal K. Bandy, and if ye'r' an apt scholar, my word for it you'll make a lily-lipped hummer. Old Kit over on the lake-shore now."

"Indeed?"

"Harry, do you remember Lord John Josey Keswick?" Cœur D'Alene Dan asked.

"I shall never forget him," Harry answered.

"That was Kit Bandy."

"Is it possible?"

"Yes, and yesterday, through an accident for which Tom here is responsible, he stumbled into the den of the Black Hawk outlaws—a great cave in the hills—and who do you guess he found there?"

"I can't imagine," replied Harry, "unless was myself, for it seems I have been knocking around on land and sea like a somnambulist."

"Not you, Harry, but your sweetheart, Rox Kline."

"A prisoner?"

"Yes, held for ransom, so she said, and so the outlaws told Lord John Josey. So his lordship—for Kit was still playin' English—offered ransom her if she'd be his wife, and after he poured out a volume or two of selected passages she consented to marry him."

"Dan, you're jesting now!" declared Harry, in doubting tones.

"I am not—I swear it. Kit told me that is one of the outlaw gang, and believes she the princess of smugglers."

"The beautiful siren!" exclaimed Harry, crestfallen. "If that's true, it proves conclusively that I shouldn't be running at large—I'm a tender fool!"

"Oh, don't be so hard on Harry West," said Old Tom with a chuckle. "You're young and the lesson will do you good. You'll make a detective and Ingis-swatter yet."

"It looks doubtful, Tom," replied Harry, "however, I'm going to stay right on deck those girls are rescued, if it costs me my wadded head."

"That's the way to warble, boy," exclaimed Rattler, approvingly, "them two gals are worth fightin' for, and we'll muss up this hull corner but what we save 'em. Hop in with us, Harry, and let that boat go adrift. We'll pull for east shore and git off the lake before we are chased off by a fleet o' red-rinds. We'll run the dertake to foller that boat with gals, or we'll run into a trap."

Harry shipped with his two friends, and at once bore away toward the eastern shore of the lake.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE INDIAN CAMP.

ON a long, narrow and densely-wooded point of land or peninsula, in the northwest extremity of Lake Kaniksu, the Blackfeet and their allies under Shaggy Head had pitched their camp some three weeks previous to the opening story. Surrounded on all sides by water, and a narrow neck where it joined the mainland was easily defended against the encroachment of enemies. Here had the band located by the determination of making themselves masters of the lake and its surroundings. But in the very first move they made, their camp was destroyed; many of their warriors were slain; and the morning following the battle at the Red Notch, Hermit Paul, there was wailing and gnashing of teeth on the peninsula.

Shaggy Head, their beloved and valiant chief, lay dead in his tent. Cries and lamentations from the women and children, and the beating of muffled drums, filled the air with mournful, discordant sounds. The warriors were bowed down in sorrow. It was a camp of mourning.

Even the coming of a warrior into camp from off the lake with the two fair captives, Little Puss and Alma Grayson, afforded but little relief to the feelings of the grief-stricken band, especially after learning that their capture had cost two more of their warriors.

It was about ten o'clock when the captives were brought into camp. They were given in custody of two old, ogreish-looking squaws, who conducted them to a dirty little lodge and shut them in.

Almost dead with fear, and suffering for the want of food and sleep, the poor captives sunk down and wept in each other's arms.

Finally some miserable food and a gourd of water was brought them. They ate sparingly and drank of the water, and would have laid down and slept but for the doleful noise outside.

It was high noon when there came a lull in the sounds without, and the maidens ventured

to peer out of their prison. To their surprise they saw a little old white woman seated upon a mule and surrounded by savages but a few rods away. She was dressed in a plain calico dress, and wore an old, flaring sun-bonnet on her head. Across her lap lay an ancient umbrella, and at her side hung a gaunt-looking hand-bag.

In reply to a question directed by an outlaw, the captives heard the old woman say, as she flourished her umbrella in the air, as if to give emphasis to her words:

"I am Sabina Bandy, the wronged and deserted wife of Christopher C. Bandy! Without cause or provocation he deserted my bed and board, and left me to struggle alone with the cold world and a carbuncle on my jaw. But my wounded heart still cries out for its old love, and I sot out to find him; and I have tracked him from Texas to Idaho, and if I get my eyes on him once more I'll make him feel the vengeance of a wronged wife's power. I'd hoped he might be in your camp, and if he should come, I pray you will tie him up and send word to Sabina Bandy, and she'll bless you."

"Old gal," a renegade was heard to reply, "if Kit Bandy'd ever sot foot in this camp you'd now be a widder. You're on the wrong track, my old fairy."

"Woe! woe! is me!" exclaimed the old woman mournfully; "will my trials and tribulations never end? Oh! if I could git one whack at 'em," and she instantly flew into a passion, "I'd 'a' wrattle him so he'd stay at home, the owdacious wretch!"

At this juncture, Long Face, the medicine-man of the tribe, who was, by virtue of his position, spokesman since the death of Shaggy Head, came up and thus addressed the old woman:

"Id! White squaw, the Blackfeet are in sorrow, Kit! I their hearts thirst for pale-face blood; but they do not make war on squaws, and yet your white face makes angry the wrath of the red-dan. You must go away or your blood will help atone for that of our slain chief."

"Oh! noble Ingin, I am so tired and hungry!" Sabina answered in flattering tones. "Will you not let me dismount and rest awhile and for a bite to stay my strength?"

With a covetous look at her mule and saddle, the medicine-man succumbed to her flattering words and granted her wish.

Wismounting, an Indian led her mule away, giving her the self-assurance she would never see it and, in.

Emerging herself, Sabina opened her hand-bag and took therefrom some bread and meat, and began munching at it as though her teeth were in good working order.

The medicine-man, having lost all interest in her, for the time being, turned away and proceeded to convene the warriors in an open council to take some action looking toward a successor to their dead chief.

In a circle, with bowed heads and manifest sorrow, some fifty or sixty red-skins and three bands of renegade whites seated themselves upon the ground. Then the medicine-man, arrayed in all his hideous, savage toggery, arose and in solemn tones addressed them:

"Shaggy Head, our great, brave chief, is dead to the land of his fathers. He was slain by our old enemies, the Crows. Shaggy Head's death must be avenged. The Blackfeet must strike the Crows and their white friends must slay them all. But who will lead them? Let the spirit of our dead chief answer, as did the spirit of Fish Mouth that led Shaggy Head to the Sacred Lodge. Shall not the laws of the Great White Wizard, who came among us when we were children, be obeyed?"

To this last question there was an affirmative answer, though but feebly given by the renegades.

"Then let the Sacred Lodge be erected," commanded the medicine-man; "and all the weapons and clothes and ornaments of the dead Shaggy Head be placed therein for the new chief that Shaggy Head's spirit will guide there. And let us rejoice that when the new chief comes, we will have the two white captives for his wives and slaves."

At once there was a commotion. The circle broke up, and the lodge that had been Shaggy Head's was removed to a secluded spot on the peninsula, and all the possessions of the dead chief placed therein for the accommodation of the new chief whom they believed the spirit of Shaggy Head would send.

Years before, a white man, a fugitive from justice, had come among this particular band of Indians. He was skilled in all the arts of

jugglery, and by this means he won the name of White Wizard, and became the patron saint of the tribe.

Soon after his advent among them, their chief was killed, and, instead of another being selected in accordance with past tribal customs, the White Wizard sprung a new scheme upon them. He led them to believe that by erecting what he called a Sacred Lodge off in some secluded spot, and placing therein the personal effects of the dead chief, the latter's spirit would guide a great warrior there, clothe him in his raiment and imbue him with a warlike spirit, and send him forth thus ordained to lead the tribe to war and victory. The scheme worked to perfection. The Wizard had a friend in hiding that he put onto the scheme, and had that friend steal into the Sacred Lodge after night, put on the dead chief's clothes, paint his face with pigments found therein, and then appear and proclaim himself the elect of the departed spirit, and chief of the tribe.

The fellow proved to be all that savage heart could wish, and for forty years thereafter the White Wizard's scheme was observed upon the death of the head chief. Nor did the chieftainship have to go begging under this plan, for there were always white renegades in the band who had a friend outside that was given the cue, and that friend at once availed himself of the secret and became chief of the tribe. Of course these same renegades knew it would be death to express their opinion of the White Wizard's deception, so they affected belief and took whatever advantage of it they could to advance their own selfish interests. Nor was the present occasion any exception to the others, for even while the Sacred Lodge was being erected, the following conversation took place between two outlaw renegades, seated within ten feet of Old Sabina Bandy:

"The infernal fools!" said one of them; "to think o' bein' bamboozled in that way is a disgrace. If I wasn't afraid o' gittin' my foot into it, I believe I'd let Shaggy's spirit run me in for chief."

"I wish I could git word to Bill Hohn, at Red Notch," added the other. "He'd make a roarin' fine chief, I tell ye."

"Why I'd like it," said the first villain, "is on 'count o' gittin' them white gals for my wives. They're screamin' little tender beauties, and the fellow that draps into Shaggy's moccasins is bound to git the gals, for that's the custom."

"S'pose we keep this old nag, Sabina Bandy, and throw her in with the gals for good measure?" facetiously observed the other renegade.

Old Sabina had taken in every word they had spoken, but if she had been deaf and dumb she could not have observed more indifference than she did.

Without coming to any definite conclusion as to what they should do about the selection of a new chief, the renegades finally went away to another part of camp; and as soon as they were gone, Old Sabina arose and went sauntering about camp. Coming to the lodge in which Puss and Alma were confined, she pulled aside the flap-door and peered in.

For this inquisitiveness she was set upon by the two squaws in charge of the tent and beaten severely; and, finally, amid the jeers and shouts of a mob of squaws and boys she was driven out of camp, the Indians having confiscated her mule.

Order being once more restored, the savages settled down to await the Shaggy Head's spirit in conducting to their midst a new chief.

CHAPTER XV.

THE NEW CHIEF COMES.

THE hours passed slowly away—slowly, indeed, to Little Puss and Alma. Hope of rescue had faded from the young breasts, and they sat in constant terror of the fate that awaited them.

At length night again settled over the land. Around a great camp-fire the Indians seated themselves, talking, smoking—waiting for the coming of their Moses. The renegades were there in the circle, too, but most of them soon lopped over on the ground and went to sleep. The women and children in their tents also waited and watched.

It was an hour of deep and anxious suspense. At the least sound—the rustle of a leaf or the snap of a coal of fire—every savage would start and gaze around him into the shadows.

It was along about midnight, when sleep and anxiety hung heavy upon the eyes and breasts of the circle of savage forms, a light step was heard.

Instantly every face was turned in the direc-

tion of the Sacred Lodge, when lo! out of the shadows, with lofty mien and stately tread, a tall form clad in the blood-stained garments of Shaggy Head, and carrying his weapons, emerged into the circle of light!

"Our chief has come!" burst from the lips of the medicine-man, and instantly every warrior prostrated himself on his face in the dust before the new leader.

The white renegades awoke and rubbing their red eyes stared at the stranger with a mingled look of surprise and disgust upon their faces.

Although the new chief's face was daubed with paint until he looked hideous, it was plain to be seen he was a white man. But of this the Indians thought nothing, for every chief since the days of the great White Wizard had, strange to say, been a white man.

While yet the warriors lay prostrate on the earth, the stranger, in a deep, impressive tone thus addressed them:

"Warriors and braves of the great Shaggy Head, give ear to the voice of Big Polar Bear!"

Quickly every savage sprang to his feet and in deathly silence listened.

"The spirit of your dead chief," the Big Polar Bear went on, "came to me in my home in the northland and bade me go on the wings of the wind and lead you to victory and power. To his lodge by the water's side the spirit led me, and there bade me don the garb of the Blackfeet. Then the spirit entered my body and brought me into your presence. Warriors, my arm is strong, my feet are swift, and my spirit burns with the red fire of vengeance. I am eager to avenge the death of Shaggy Head!"

This proclamation was received with a fierce shout of savage delight, and for several minutes at least night was made hideous with a series of welcoming orgies. But a single yet trifling incident occurred to mar the grand ovation given the Big Polar Bear: a renegade made some derogatory remark to a friend about the new chief looking like an "old dismantled shite-poke," and an Indian, overhearing it, promptly resented it by sinking his tomahawk to the eye in the renegade's brain, and then dragging the body out where the squaws and boys could hack it into mince-meat.

After order had once more been restored, the chief made a fiery and impassioned speech in which he set forth the policy he should pursue in dealing with his enemies, all of which was heartily approved by his delighted warriors.

To destroy the Crows and drive the white hunters from the valley was the first thing he proposed to do.

Prolific indeed was Big Polar Bear in promises, and loud was he in praise of his own prowess in battle. Many were his deeds of daring in the far-off northland that he recounted to the infinite delight of his superstitious hearers.

Little Puss and Alma Grayson heard the excitement that followed the new chief's arrival, and ventured to look out. They saw the wretch's hideous face and shrunk back, shuddering anew with terror.

The Sacred Lodge was now brought back to camp and erected for the use of Big Polar, and when it had been furnished with every means of comfort the camp afforded, Long Face, the medicine-man, once more came to the front and said:

"The night is far gone. Big Polar Bear must be weary and in need of rest. His lodge awaits him yonder; but it is empty, and he will be lonely. This must not be. He shall have squaws to wait on him and share his lodge. In yonder tent are two fair white captives. The great chief shall have them both for his wives and slaves."

"Let the white captives be brought before Big Polar Bear, that he may look upon their faces and see that they are fair," commanded the chief.

The poor captives, in mortal terror, were dragged into the presence of the chief. For a moment or two the painted monster gazed at them like a hungry tiger, then said:

"They are boss—they are lovely. Big Polar Bear wants them both for his wives. He would take a dozen like them."

"Then it shall be so," declared the medicine-man; "I have spoken. They are the wives of Big Polar Bear. Let them be taken to his lodge."

Straightway the maidens were conducted to the chief's lodge. At the door Alma fainted and was carried inside. Little Puss broke away from her escort and endeavored to escape, but she was caught, brought back and placed in the lodge. Then Big Polar Bear entered, drew the flap over the entrance, and the three were alone in the dark tent.

CHAPTER XVI.
A HAPPY SURPRISE.

LITTLE PUSS shrunk back into a dark corner of the lodge, and there crouched down, breathless and speechless in terror. A silence that was broken only by the labored breathing of Alma Grayson, now reigned in the lodge. Fully a minute passed and then Puss heard Big Polar Bear say in a low tone:

"Puss, darter o' Hermit Paul, fear not. I am your friend, here to save you, not to harm a hair o' your head. I am Kit Bandy, the Mountain Detective. I'm playin' a trick on these Ingins to rescue you gals. Do you hear? do you understand?"

Puss heard his revelation, but she could hardly comprehend how it could be true. The man spoke in a changed and kindly tone, it was true, but how such a villainous-looking wretch could be a friend was what bothered her. Seeing she hesitated to answer, Kit Bandy, for he Big Polar Bear was, again asked:

"Did you hear me, Puss? Answer, for we must have no misunderstanding."

"I heard you," the girl found voice to reply.

"And you understand I'm your friend, Kit Bandy?"

"You have said so," Puss responded.

"And I mean it, by the horn o' Joshua! Didn't you see my wife Sabina Bandy in camp to-day? It was she who put me onto this chief-business. I expect I look ugly, but that's natural with Kit Bandy. I'm goin' out to give some orders to put out all the fires, and while I'm gone you brace up Miss Alma, and both be ready to go with me whenever I say the word. We'll manage some way to git off before mornin'. There's a boat at the lower end of the peninsula we'll sail in. Now, brace up, and be brave, and be ready. Understand, Puss?"

"Yes, sir," answered Puss in a tone that no longer indicated the least doubt.

Big Polar Bear turned and left the lodge. Many of his warriors were seated around the fire discussing the merits of their new chief, and advancing to the circle he was about to speak when there suddenly burst upon the night a hideous war-whoop. It was the battle-cry of the Crow Indians. They had made an attack on the guards at the neck of the peninsula!

A look of disappointment swept over the face of Big Polar Bear, but quickly recovering his presence of mind, he uttered a yell, and drawing his tomahawk dashed away up the peninsula shouting to his warriors to follow.

Like an avalanche the red-skins swept up through the camp and by the chief's lodge, yelling like demons—fairly deafening the startled captives, who could not understand the meaning of the wild commotion.

The girls, however, were not long kept in doubt as to what was going. The fierce tumult of the Indian battle grew more furious every moment, and they finally realized that their captors had been assaulted by enemies.

They ventured again to peer out of their prison. They looked for their friend, Kit Bandy. He was nowhere in sight; but to and fro from lodge to lodge, and across the grounds within the light of the camp, ran women and children in wild excitement.

Suddenly the two watchers saw three men come from the shadows of the woods into the circle of light. At a glance they saw they were white men, before whom the Indian women and children fled shrieking in mortal terror.

Up through the camp, their advance undisputed by a single warrior—for all were gone to the scene of battle—they came, peering into every lodge they passed.

Suddenly a cry of joy burst from Puss's lips.

"Oh! Alma! it's our friends!"

The three men came on. The girls stepped from the lodge, and the next moment Cœur D'Alene Dan, Old Tom Rattler, and Harry West stood before them!

CHAPTER XVII.

TOM RATTLER GETS 'BOUNCED.'

LITTLE PUSS and Alma Grayson became almost delirious with joy at the sight of their friends. They cried and laughed by turns, and Puss, unable to restrain her emotions, threw her arms about Cœur D'Alene Dan's neck, and gave her big lover a rapturous kiss.

"See here," suddenly exclaimed Old Tom, "if that isn't to be passed around, we'd better be pullin' out o' this. Them yellin' squaws 'll bring us trouble."

"Yes," added Cœur D'Alene, "we've no time to lose, girls. The Crows are fighting up the peninsula in order to draw the Blackfeet from camp to enable us to slip in and rescue you."

"But, Dan, a man calling himself Kit

Bandy," spoke up Little Puss, "and disguised as an Indian chief, left our lodge a few minutes ago. He said he would soon return and help us to escape."

"By the great Rosycrusians!" exclaimed Rattler; "I told you folks when that old buccaneer failed to show up this evening that he warn't idle—that he'd bob up when and whar least expected. Oh, he's a hummer!"

"If the girls leave here then before he returns, in case he does, he will not know that they are with us, and it may cause him trouble," said young West.

"We can arrange that," Cœur D'Alene Dan replied. "Let the girls go at once with Rattler down to the boats, and there await our coming."

Without further words the girls and Old Tom hurried away to where two canoes were concealed at the lower end of the peninsula.

Cœur D'Alene Dan and Harry West entered the chief's lodge, and with revolver in hand awaited the coming of the old mountain detective.

Five minutes, perhaps, had been thus passed when the form of a tall savage appeared at the entrance, and said, in a low, excited tone:

"Come, gals, I've got the varlets all at work, and now's our chance."

Dan and Harry recognized the voice as that of Kit Bandy, true enough, and Dan at once replied:

"They're not here, Kit; but we, Cœur D'Alene Dan and Harry West are. We sent the girls down to the boats, and remained here to notify you of the fact, for the girls told us that you were on hand."

"Good, by the horn o' Joshua!" exclaimed Kit; "lead the way, for if my warriors find I have deserted them, they'll make it intrustin' for me if they catch me."

Down through the camp at a double quick Dan led the way—through the dense timber and darkness for half a mile, when they emerged from the shadows onto a sandy, moonlit beach where lay the two canoes in one of which sat Tom Rattler and the two girls.

"Oh, thank Heaven! he is with them!" cried Little Puss, at sight of Old Kit.

Bandy gave Old Tom Rattler one glance, then strode swiftly forward—entering the water to his knees—until he stood by the side of the canoe in which Tom sat, and without a word to any one, or before any one could speak, he seized Rattler by the collar of his hunting-jacket and the leg, and lifting him clear of the canoe he was in, plumped him down in the other craft. Then springing into the boat with the girls, he seated himself and grabbed up the paddle, exclaiming:

"Waugh! I am Big Polar Bear! these gals are my wives, by the horn o' Joshua!"

And as he thus spoke for the benefit of the astonished and discomfited Tom Rattler, he dipped his paddle and sent the canoe gliding out into the lake.

"By the great Rosycrusians!" exclaimed Old Tom, gazing up into the mirthful faces of his friends, Dan and Harry; "boys, did you see that? Did you observe how it was did?—why it was did? and what it was that did it? War that Kit Bandy? war it a man or the devil disgracin' hisself in the guise o' that old Mountain Detective?"

Dan and Harry seated themselves in the boat with Old Tom, and the latter, plying the paddle with all his strength and skill, sent the craft speeding after the other.

Meanwhile, Bandy was out some forty rods from the peninsula and still pulling away with all his might.

Suddenly Old Kit burst into a good-natured laugh when he saw the boat with Old Rattler and his friends coming in pursuit.

"By the horn o' Joshua!" he exclaimed, "I reckon I'm even with that old tarrantler for throwin' me over the cliff."

"Oh, I hope you were not displeased at our leaving that horrid Indian camp with him, Mr. Bandy," Alma ventured to say.

"Lord, no, gals! it made me rejoice with exceeding great joy when I found other friends war on hand to help me, for, as Big Polar Bear and your rescuer, I had my hands full. I had to rush off and lead them savages to battle, and then watch for a chance to slip away in the dark. Displeased? no, I'm pleased. I just wanted to play a trick on Old Tom; and it'll be fun to hear him spout like a wounded whale when they come up with us."

Permitting his canoe to rest, the one with the others soon came up. As it ran alongside, Old Tom grappled that of Bandy and the girls and held them together, saying as he did so:

"Kit Bandy, I brand you as a thief and a

marauder, and if you've any respect for them gals you'll now perceed to jump overboard and drown yerself with as much dignity as you can command. It will save me powder and lead for better use—to kill ki-yotes and Ingins with, and—"

"Oh, close your ole phonograph, Tom," interrupted Kit. "You'll make Big Polar Bear and his wives sick. You can steal a gal from an English lord, and then feloniously and murderously fling him over a precipice, but you can't come none o' your insane-asylum games on Big Polar."

"Kitsie, I alers chalked you down as a delicious old fool, but now I see I've been drawin' it too mild and child-like," returned Tom, and then of Alma he asked: "Miss Alma, do you recognize in that wretched attempt to appear as a respectable, cut-throat Ingins, Lord Keswick, who I heaved over the cliff yesterday when he tried to catch you?"

"No, Tom," answered Alma; "I do not. Surely that cannot be possible!"

"It's the very same critter that nightly scared you into fits!" declared Tom. "Great Rosycrusians! what a delightful lord he made—such a rare specimen that if I'd had time I'd killed the thing and had it stuffed, and put on exhibition with an African gorilla as the Missin' Link between the chimpanzee and old Goliath's fire-tongs. Yes, Miss Alma, that critter is that same Lord Kisswicked."

"Is it possible, Mr. Bandy?" questioned Alma.

"It is true, by the horn o' Joshua!" answered Bandy.

"Then, indeed, I owe you an apology," said the maiden. "I was so frightened by those two outlaws, that I fancied you an enemy, also. I am truly sorry, for your fall over that embankment might have killed or crippled you."

"It's all right now, Miss Grayson," Kit replied; "but, as for Old Tom Rattler, I'll settle with him before he dies for I'll never meet him after."

"Right you are, Kitsie, for you'll never be able to smuggle and defraud your way into heaven! You can fool a fool Ingins, lie to a stranger, deceive an innocent gal, but ye can't pull the wool over St. Peter's eyes!"

After the badinage of words had ceased between the two old border warriors, Bandy narrated the story of his adventures. He had left his friends at the Crow camp after the battle at Hermit Paul's cabin, and hastened back to where he had left Ichabod Flea in charge of Russell Wyatt. It was his intention of taking them to the Indian camp, but meeting Alma Grayson's brother and two other men in search of Alma, he turned Wyatt over to them with the request that they return with the prisoner to their own camp, and trust to himself and friends to rescue the girl.

The three men complying with this request, Kit and his little pard returned to the lake. Having heard Cœur D'Alene Dan say that the Blackfeet were encamped on a peninsula in the northeast corner of the lake, they proceeded in that direction to make a reconnoissance; for Kit was satisfied now that the wind had carried the boat with the girls and Harry West down into the vicinity of the enemy's camp, and that they had undoubtedly been made prisoners.

When they arrived in the vicinity of the Blackfeet, Ichabod Flea, as Old Sabina, was rigged out and sent boldly into the Indian camp on her famous mule. And while she was there, as the reader has already seen, she not only discovered that the girls were captives there, but, also, discovered the secret of the manner in which Shaggy Head's successor was expected to appear among them. Of this secret Old Kit proceeded to avail himself, having reached the Sacred Lodge after midnight by swimming from the mainland to the peninsula the distance of over half a mile. The rest of his movements we will give in his own language.

"Havin' found the Sacred Lodge," he said, "by following Sabina's directions, I entered and found myself in darkness. The spirit of Shaggy Head furnished no light, so I groped around and gathered up everything I could find loose and ran down to the moonlit beach and proceeded to make my toilet. Shaggy Head's royal breeches fitted me snugly, and when I got dressed up all that war lackin' war my war-paint."

"Shaggy'd left a good supply of this, and I proceeded to daub it on with my finger 'thout regard to the harmony o' colors and shades. Then I went back to the Sacred Lodge, groped again for Shaggy's war-tools, and I was ready to go forth, and I goed."

"Wal, I war received with an ovation, and issued a red-hot proclamation-of-war 'gainst the

Crows and Old Tom Rattler, and forthwith the Great Medicine proceeded to present me with two beautiful white captives for wives, and after lookin' at 'em I decided to accept, and waltzed 'em to my lodge. Miss Alma fainted and Little Puss showed signs o' rebellion, but as soon as we war alone I told 'em who I war, and—"

"It's a wonder ye did," piped in Old Tom.

"Silence, pirate!" commanded Kit, and then he continued: "I then stepped outside to issue an order to put out the fires when, bang! whoop! went a gun and an Ingin yell up the peninsula, and then the battle begun. This was somethin' not down on the programme, and it kind o' pestered me; but I quickly saw that I must lead forth to battle, and with an original war-whoop full o' gore and destruction I bounded away calling to my braves to follow. And they did, and as soon as I got them all engaged I sneaked back to my waiting wives, and—lo! I found Cœur D'Alene Dan and Harry West in their place. Shortly afterwards I found Tom Rattler."

"Well, well," said Cœur D'Alene Dan, "if we'd known of your movements, ours would scarcely have been necessary. When we found out by Harry that the girls were captives we reconnoitered the peninsula and, having determined the exact location of the Blackfeet's camp, we planned an attack. Finding the neck of the peninsula heavily guarded because of its distance from camp, it was arranged that the Crows attack the guard and make a big show of fight. This was to draw the warriors away from camp, and when this was accomplished, Rattler, West and myself were to proceed in two boats to the lower end of the peninsula, enter camp, release the girls, and escape just as we have."

"If we succeeded in our part, we were to signal the Crows that fact, and I think we'd better pull around to the shore and give the signal of our success."

This met with Bandy's approval, for he had left Ichabod Flea at a point on the northern shore to await his return from the Indian camp.

In a short time they had landed, and were soon afterward joined by Ichabod Flea, while Cœur D'Alene Dan and Old Tom proceeded along the shore to a certain point and there signaled the Crows their return to land. This they did by striking a fire on the open beach and permitting it to burn some five or ten minutes.

In a short time thereafter the firing and yelling at the neck of the peninsula ceased, and in the course of an hour Hermit Paul and the Crows had joined the party on the lake-shore and Little Puss was once more clasped in her father's arms.

It was quite a happy meeting all around, though the news of the destruction of their home was quite a sad blow to Little Puss.

Kit informed Alma of the meeting with her friends the previous night, and she was greatly cheered over the prospect of soon meeting with them herself.

The Crows and whites repaired together to the camp of Black Horse which they reached at sunrise, hungry and fatigued.

An Indian breakfast was prepared for the whites and partaken of with a keen relish by all hands.

A rest until after dinner was decided upon by the hunters and mountaineers.

After dinner arrangements for departure with Alma were speedily made, and not until the last moment did Hermit Paul and his daughter make up their minds to quit the country and go South with the party. This decision was brought about by Hermit Paul taking Old Kit and Little Puss aside and, in tones of sadness, saying:

"Puss, this old detective, Kit Bandy, is hunting for the daughter of Alfred Hull, and I have admitted that you are that person—Catharine Hull."

"Hunting for me, father?" exclaimed Puss, smiling, "why, I'm sure I'm not lost now."

"Gal," said Old Kit, "you're an heiress—rich as old Bildervant. Your father was the only son and heir of Sir Isaac Hull, of England, and since you're Alfred Hull's only living child, you come in for all the Hull wealth."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Puss, half incredulously, "that sounds like a romance reads."

"It's true, nevertheless, Puss," declared Kit, "and I'll tell you all about the matter, and why you're wanted so bad."

And, as the reader has already heard it, Bandy related the whole story of the death of Sir Isaac, the conspiracy of the executors, and the presence of the impostors in the home that should

then be in possession of Catharine Hull, alias "Little Puss."

The girl heard the story through in silence; but when Kit told her she must go at once to England and prove her rights to her father's inheritance, she emphatically declared:

"I will not go to England for all England's wealth! The property of Sir Isaac must be accursed."

"Then it will go to the crown," Kit informed her.

"Let it go. I would like to see those guilty men and women impostors punished, but that can be done anyhow if Russell Wyatt turns State's evidence. I cannot—I will not leave my dear father, Hermit Paul, and—"

"Cœur D'Alene Dan," put in Old Kit.

"Well, yes, sir, if I must. I like Dan, and Dan likes me," was the frank and honest confession of the outspoken little lady.

"But," said Kit, "your father should go, too; his evidence will be all-important in proving your claim. Them impostors will do some hard fighting to hold their ill-gotten gains."

While neither Puss nor her step-father would consent to anything at that time, they informed Kit that they would take the matter under advisement for a few days—at least, until they should reach a land of safety and have a talk with the English detective.

So, with this understanding, they bid farewell to the Crows and went away with the whites.

It was late in the night when the party reached the camp of the tourists on the southern extremity of Lake Kaniksu, where all received a royal welcome, and where joy reigned supreme the rest of that night over the safe return of Alma to her friends.

But by early dawn next morning the tourists were ready to depart forever from the land of the savage and outlaw. They had had enough recreation in that country to last them a lifetime.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BREAKING UP THE "NEST."

AFTER escorting their friends to a point on the North Pacific Railway, Cœur D'Alene Dan, Bandy and pard, Tom Rattler, and Harry West, resolved to make another trip to Red Notch Camp, and institute a thorough investigation of the true character of that place.

They reached the camp at night and proceeded to the "Fodder Corral" for lodging.

Harry West, however, had no desire to renew his love affair with the charming Roxy. The story of Peter Grew, Keswick's valet, and the wound on his head, were still fresh in his memory. Moreover, the young detective's acquaintance with Alma Grayson had dispelled from his breast all infatuation for the landlord's daughter; and, we may as well remark here, his acquaintance with Alma grew into a friendship that eventually ripened into genuine love and culminated in a life-partnership.

To the surprise of the party, they found on reaching the Fodder Corral that Hank Kline and his daughter had departed from Red Notch some ten hours previous, having sold out the hotel to Bill Hohn.

This sudden departure looked a little suspicious, and when the brigade of detectives and hunters learned that the father and daughter had gone north, they concluded to make a descent upon the Black Hawks' Nest, and at once departed from Red Notch.

Timing themselves so as to reach the outlaw rendezvous under cover of darkness, they crept up the defile to within fifty paces of the entrance to the cave. The moon was shining full in the valley, enabling the detectives to see that quite a commotion was going on among the robbers. It did not take them long to determine what it meant: the robbers were preparing to abandon the cave.

No less than a score of Indian ponies stood before the entrance to the cave. Half of them were loaded down with packs; the others were saddled and bridled for their riders.

Leaving their friends, Cœur D'Alene Dan and Kit Bandy crept still closer—so close, indeed, that when the outlaws issued from the cave to mount their ponies, the scouts recognized Hank Kline and his daughter Roxy among the nine persons that came in sight.

Hastening back to their friends, Dan and Kit communicated their discovery to them, and proposed an attack upon the absconding gang.

This met the approval of the others and as the outlaws, by this time, had mounted, ready to depart, no time was to be lost, and so Cœur D'Alene Dan boldly stepped into the moon-

light, and in a deep, thunderous voice demanded:

"Surrender, every mother's son of you!"

The outlaws were stricken dumb by this startling demand, and seemed paralyzed in their saddles. The fair Roxy was the only one who appeared to maintain her presence of mind, and before the last word had fairly fallen from Dan's lips, she raised a pistol and fired, the ball passing so close to the big hunter's head that he felt the wind on his cheek. Then, as the desperate woman put her pony into a gallop, she shouted:

"Away, men! away!"

Her words were taken as the signal for the ambushed brigade to fire, and as one their five rifles rung out. Three or four saddles were emptied, and both outlaws and their ponies thrown into the wildest confusion; and the result was, but two of the nine escaped the deadly revolvers of the brigade, and one of the two was the bold and dashing Roxy.

Most of the saddle and pack ponies were captured, and upon examination of the bundles on the backs of the latter, several cases of crude opium were found. This find settled, beyond all doubt, the fact of the Black Hawks being smugglers as well as outlaws in general.

One outlaw, who had been mortally wounded and died in a few hours, became quite talkative and answered all questions without hesitation. He said the Black Hawks were abandoning their retreat, believing that Lord John Joseph Keswick had bribed Wyatt, or "Reddy," Captain Dago's business manager, and that their disappearance meant sure destruction to the band. He admitted that they were doing some smuggling of various goods over the border.

This department, he said, was under the management of Miss Roxy Kline, who, by the way, was a married woman and the wife of Captain Dago. He also said that it was Roxy who had attempted to kill Harry West.

She had listened at the key-hole of the parlor door and heard West tell Cœur D'Alene Dan of his being a Government detective in search of opium-smugglers, and, to protect her department of the Black Hawks' business schemes, she concluded that powder and lead would be more speedy and effective than love-making in getting away with the young detective, inasmuch as she was a married woman.

This last confession was a damper on Harry West, and he promised to divide the first million dollars he made "pounding sand" among his four friends if they would keep the whole matter a secret. All agreed to do so except Old Tom Rattler. He thought the joke was too good to keep, but he promised that, in telling it, he would substitute the name of Kit Bandy for that of Harry West.

Both Captain Dago and Hank Kline were killed in their attempt to escape, and what became of the fair and false Roxy was not known.

With their captured ponies and goods the brigade returned the next day to Hausel Junction, where the friends separated.

Harry West returned to Portland to report the success of his hunt for opium-smugglers, but never to venture out again in the mountains as a detective.

Kit Bandy and pard proceeded East with their prisoner, Russell Wyatt, while Old Tom Rattler and Cœur D'Alene Dan having joined issues, went southward into the hills on a big bear hunt, Dan having orders for no less than fifty grizzly hides at fancy prices.

Hermit Paul and his daughter settled down in Missoula, but as soon as the English detective heard of Puss's refusal to go and claim her inheritance he went to Missoula to see her, and, after much persuasion, she, with Hermit Paul's approval, finally concluded to make the contest for the great property and, if successful, convert it into cash and return to America, for live in England she never would.

Russell Wyatt was also very desirous that she should make the contest—not because he was anxious to right a wrong, but to make his own punishment as light as possible, now that he could no longer dodge the law.

But before Puss had consented to anything she held an interview with her big lover, Cœur D'Alene Dan, and obtained his views of the matter. Feeling perfectly secure in her love—sure that the glittering fascinations of the world, outside that of the mountain vales in which she had learned to love, would not win her from him, he advised her to act upon the counsel of the English detective.

This she did, and at last accounts the matter was pending in the courts of England with the promise of a speedy settlement in her favor.

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- 248 Sierra Sam's Secret; or, The Bloody Footprints.
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- 339 Kangaroo Kiti's Racket.
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- 82 Kit Harefoot, the Wood-Hawk.
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- 106 Old Frosty, the Guide; or, The White Queen.
- 123 Kiowa Charley, the White Mustang.
- 139 Judge Lynch, Jr.; or, The Boy Vigilante.
- 155 Gold Trigger, the Sport; or, The Girl Avenger.
- 169 Tornado Tom; or, Injun Jack From Red Core.
- 188 Ned Temple, the Border Boy.
- 198 Arkansas; or, The Queen of Fate's Revenge.
- 207 Navajo Nick, the Boy Gold Hunter.
- 215 Captain Bullet; or, Little Tonknot's Crusade.
- 231 Plucky Phil; or, Rosa, the Red Jezebel.
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- 255 Captain Apollo, the King-Pin of Bowle.
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- 279 Old Wink; or, The Buckskin Desperadoes.
- 294 Dynamite Dan; or, The Bowie Blade of Gochetopa.
- 302 The Mountain Detective; or, The Trigger Bar Bally.
- 316 Old Eclipse, Trump Card of Arizona.
- 326 The Ten Pards; or, The Terror of Take-Notice.
- 336 Big Benson; or, The Queen of the Lasso.
- 345 Pitless Matt; or, Red Thunderbolt's Secret.
- 356 Cool Sam and Par; or, The Terrible Six.
- 366 Velvet Foot, the Indian Detective.
- 386 Captain Cullasa; or, The Buccaneer's Girl Foe.
- 396 Rough Rob; or, The Twin Champions of Blue Blazes.
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- 418 Felix Fox, the Boy Spotter.
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- 543 Dodger Dick's Double; or, The Rival Boy Detectives.
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- 582 Dodger Dick's Drop.
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- 216 Bison Bill, the Prince of the Plains; or, Buffalo Bill's Pluck.
- 222 Grit, the Bravo Sport; or, The Woman Trailer.
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- 245 Merle, the Middy; or, The Heir of an Ocean Fre lance.
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- 284 Merle Monte's Pledge; or, The Sea Marauder.
- 287 Billy Blue-Eyes, the Boy Rover.
- 304 The Dead Shot Dandy; or, Benito, the Boy Bugler.
- 308 Dead Shot Dandy's Double.
- 314 The Mysterious Marauder; or, The Boy Bugler's Trail.
- 377 Bonodel, the Boy Rover; or, The Flagless Schooner.
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